

THE JEWS IN
AMERICAN HISTORY

1654 - 1865

by Philip S. Foner



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1. Jews in Colonial America

SINCE earliest Colonial days, Jews have played a part in the building of American democracy, participating in this country's struggles for freedom, sharing in its victories and contributing to its growth. The Jews even participated in the discovery of America. Spanish Jews helped finance the voyage of Christopher Columbus, and Jewish scientists and geographers contributed to its success by their improvements in the compass and the application of astronomy to navigation. Moreover, of the hundred and twenty men with Columbus on the first voyage, five or six were Marronos, or Jews converted to Christianity to escape the persecution of the Inquisition.

In September, 1654, a tiny vessel, the *St. Charles*, arrived in New Amsterdam with twenty-three Jewish passengers. Individual Jews had arrived in America before 1654, but the history of the Jewish Community in the United States begins with the arrival of the *St. Charles* at the harbor of New Amsterdam.

The Jewish Pilgrim Fathers had much in common with those hardy pioneers who had landed at Plymouth Rock three and a half decades earlier. Like them they were fundamentally dissenters rebelling against persecutions and discriminations. They came to this country to escape the wave of persecution instituted against the Jews of Brazil after the Portuguese recapture of that territory from the Dutch.*

* During the years 1650-1654, the Jews in Brazil had been treated under Dutch rule on a basis of equality with the other inhabitants. But in 1650 an insurrection of the Portuguese took place in Brazil which was assisted by the crown of Portugal, and after 1654 with the occupation of Recife in

The Jews who arrived in New Amsterdam were soon to set a precedent that most American Jews have followed ever since, namely, the bold assertion of the right of all men—regardless of race, color and creed—to enjoy the full fruits of democracy. Dictatorial and autocratic Peter Stuyvesant, Director-General of New Netherlands, was determined to prevent the settlement of Jews in the colony. There were already too many people in the colony who believed in the democratic principles of government to suit the blustering and overbearing Peter Stuyvesant. Had not the people in 1653 drawn up a "Humble Remonstrance" in which they demanded that they be given the right to make laws and elect officials on the ground that such functions belonged to "every free-born man . . ."? Stuyvesant knew that the Jewish immigrants would support this "Humble Remonstrance."

Partly to prevent accessions to the rebels in the colony and partly to divert the attention of the people from the immediate issue—the question of self-government—Stuyvesant launched an anti-Semitic campaign.

On September 22, 1654, Stuyvesant petitioned the directors of the Dutch West India Company not to permit any of "the Jewish nation . . . to infect and trouble this new colony to the detraction of your worships and the dissatisfaction of your worships' most affectionate subjects." "Giving them liberty," he added, "we cannot refuse the Luthers and Papists." In other words, toleration of the Jews would bring toleration of other minorities.

The following March the Burgomasters and Schepens of the City approved a proposal calling for the expulsion of the Jews. But during these months the Jews of New Amsterdam had not been inactive, and they appealed to their brethren in Holland for aid in their struggle. The latter, many of whom were large stockholders in the Dutch West India Company, instantly put pressure

Pernambuco by the Portuguese, conditions became unsafe for the Jews. Some went to the next available Dutch possession, Curaçao, but this island was neither fertile enough nor large enough to provide for all Jewish families in Brazil. Some families, therefore, left for Holland and New Amsterdam.

Historians have differed over the question whether the Jewish settlers who came to New Amsterdam in September, 1654 were from Brazil or from the West Indies. Most available evidence points to the former region as the point of origin.

on the syndicate to reject Stuyvesant's request for the expulsion of the Jews. After some deliberation, the directors of the Company issued an order on February 16, 1655, which informed the governor that his proposal would be "inconsistent with reason and justice," and explicitly instructed him to permit Jews to travel, trade and live in the colony, "provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation."

Thus by fighting for their rights with considerable fortitude the Jews of New Amsterdam had won the initial round in their battle with the autocratic governor. But the battle was by no means over. The Jews were determined to secure the right to share in the common benefits of citizenship and to enjoy equality before the law. In this battle they were fighting for the essential democratic principles later embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

All male inhabitants of New Amsterdam capable of bearing arms were enrolled in the Burgher Guard for the protection and defense of the City. In 1655 the reactionary Stuyvesant regime passed an ordinance providing that Jews should "remain exempt from general training and guard duty, on condition that each male person over sixteen and under sixty contribute . . . sixty-five stivers each month." The handful of New Amsterdam Jews refused to be discriminated against in this manner. In November, 1655, Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimson, leaders of the Jewish community, petitioned the authorities for permission to stand guard at the stockade of New Amsterdam like other citizens or be relieved from the payment of the tax. Their petition was rejected with the curt advice that "they are privileged to go elsewhere if they like." But these men were not easily frightened, and they determined to carry the fight further. They appealed to the authorities in Holland for permission to perform military duty, and their petition was granted. In fact, even before it was granted, Asser Levy, in defiance of the authorities in New Amsterdam, proceeded to perform his military duties.

The next stage in the significant battle involved the right of Jews to acquire and hold property, a right enjoyed by every

citizen in New Amsterdam. In December, 1655, Salvator D'Andrada, a Jewish merchant, purchased a house and lot at public auction. But when he sought to take possession of the property, he was forbidden to do so by Stuyvesant's myrmidons. Once again the Jews refused to adopt a "hush-hush" attitude, and roundly denounced the action, pointing out that since they were taxed like other citizens, they should be entitled to acquire and hold property. When the matter was brought to the attention of the Dutch West India Company, the syndicate took action to rescind the order. In a letter dated June 14, 1656, the Company severely reprimanded Stuyvesant and specifically ordered him to recognize the right of Jews to engage in all lawful business pursuits and occupations.

The stage was now set for the final phase of the battle. In April, 1657, Asser Levy appeared in court and asked for admission to citizenship. The record shows with what consummate skill and confidence, the militant Asser Levy argued his case:

"Asser Levy, a Jew, appears in Court; requests to be admitted a burgher; claims that such ought not to be refused him as he keeps watch and ward like other Burghers; showing a Burgher certificate from the City of Amsterdam that the Jew is a Burgher there."

The Court turned the matter over to Stuyvesant and the Council. Realizing that this was their fight, too, since their own rights depended upon the successful outcome of the struggle, the leading Jews of the City rallied to support Asser Levy's request. In a petition to the authorities they pointed out that their brethren in Amsterdam enjoyed the rights of citizenship, and that "our Nation as long as they have been here, have with others borne and paid, and still bear, all Burgher burdens. . . . We, therefore, reverently request your Noble Worships to please not exclude us out from the Burgher right. . . ." By now the reactionary Stuyvesant regime realized that the Jews meant to fight the issue tenaciously until they gained their rights. Reluctantly the government acquiesced, and, on April 21, 1657, Jews were admitted to citizenship. Asser Levy, whose grandson, Lewis Levy,

was later to serve as an officer in a New Jersey regiment during the Revolutionary War, became the first Jewish citizen in America.

Though Asser Levy was always ready to defend the rights of the Jews, he was no separatist, isolated from the non-Jewish population. Indeed, the Christian minister, Madison C. Peters, has pointed out: "No other Jew in his day seems to have had so many dealings with Christians as Levy. In 1671 he lent the money for the building of the first Lutheran Church in New York. He was named as the executor of wills of Christian merchants."

By 1664, when the English took over the colony of New Amsterdam, individual Jews or isolated Jewish families could be found up and down the Atlantic seaboard. The second Jewish settlement in the United States was founded in Newport, Rhode Island. Indeed, among all the New England colonies only Rhode Island offered the Jew complete toleration. Nor is this surprising, for this colony was a haven of refuge to the oppressed and persecuted of all sects. Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island, was one of the earliest champions in America of the cause of religious liberty and toleration. He sought to found a colony from whose gates none should be turned away, neither "papists and protestants, Jews and Turks." *

"It is the will and command of God," wrote Williams, "that . . . a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or Antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to *all* men in all Nations and Countries. . . . True civility and Christianity may flourish in a state of Kingdome, notwithstanding the permission of divers and contrary consciences, either of Jew or Gentile."

And in *Major Butler's Fourth Paper*, 1652, Roger Williams declared: "I humbly conceive it to be the duty of the civil magistrate to break down that superstitious wall of separation

* The charter of the colony, obtained in 1663, declared that no person should be "any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question, for any differences in opinion in matters of religion. . . ." William McDonald, *Select Charters and Other Documents Illustrative of American History*, 1606-1775, New York, 1899, p. 128.

(as to civil things) between the Gentiles and the Jews, and freely without their asking to make way for their peaceable habitation among us."

Between 1655 and 1657 Jews from New Amsterdam and Curaçao settled in Rhode Island, and in the spring of 1658 fifteen Jews came from Holland to Newport. That same year in Newport a congregation under the name of "Jeshuat Israel" built the first synagogue in North America.*

The progressive doctrines of Roger Williams were upheld by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1684, in reply to a petition of Simon Medus, David Brown and other Jews anxious to ascertain their exact position in the community. "We declare," the Assembly stated, "that they may expect as good protection here, as any stranger being not of our nation, residing amongst us in this his Majesty's colony ought to have, being obedient to his Majesty's laws."

This answer, affirming the right of Jews to settle in Rhode Island, encouraged other Jews to come to the colony. On the eve of the Revolution there were two hundred Jewish families in Newport alone.

Jewish communities also arose in two of the southern colonies and Pennsylvania. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, drafted by the English liberal, John Locke, in 1669, contained provisions guaranteeing religious toleration to "Jews, heathens and other dissenters . . ." and provided that ". . . any seven or more persons, agreeing in any religion, shall constitute a church. . . ." Jews migrated in sufficient numbers into Charleston, South Carolina, to establish a religious community in 1750.

Georgia was founded to rehabilitate debtors who were rotting away their lives in English prisons, to aid oppressed German Protestants, and to serve as a buffer area for South Carolina against the Indians. Poor Jews in Europe were quite willing to expose themselves to the danger of frontier life if they would but be allowed to settle in Georgia. A boatload of Sephardic Jews,

* Although permanent Jewish residence in New York City dates back to 1654, it was not until 1728 that the religious congregation could build its own synagogue. Before that time worship was conducted in rented quarters.

and another of German Jews, reached the model colony shortly after the arrival of the first governor, James Oglethorpe. Both the trustees in London and the settlers in the colony demanded the exclusion of Jewish settlers. Oglethorpe, however, rejected these bigoted requests and permitted the Jews to remain and set up a religious community.

When William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania, he took pains to let it be known that religious liberty would be guaranteed not only to Christians of every description but to all who "acknowledged one Almighty and Eternal God to be the Creator, Upholder, and Ruler of the World." Jews who learned of this liberal outlook came to the new colony, and about 1745 a Jewish community was organized at Philadelphia.

A few years later Jews began to carve a niche for themselves on the Pennsylvania frontier. Of the eleven original families that are classed as the founders of Easton, Pennsylvania, in 1750, Meyer Hart and his wife, Rachel, were one. The forty people in these eleven families, Jew and Gentile alike, clustered about a little frontier stockade, in a place where the war-whoop of the Indians was a familiar and much dreaded sound. In 1753, when the somewhat enlarged community built a free school, Meyer Hart's name led the list of contributors. The cause of free public education was advanced by his donation of twenty pounds of wrought nails.

Jewish settlers also played a leading role in the frontier community of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1747, Richard Locke wrote of the population of Lancaster: "Here are less Quakers than in many other counties . . . here are ten families of Jews." That same year the community of Lancaster was enriched by the arrival of Dr. Isaac Cohen, who with a quaint notice announced his intention to set up practice as a physician:

"Dr. Isaac Cohen from Hamburg in Germany, who studied seven years in the City of Copenhagen, informs the public that he has lately arrived in Lancaster, where he intends to practice physic and the art of healing, at the home of John Hatz, inn-keeper. . . . N.B.—Poor persons cured gratis if they can show a certificate from a clergyman that they are really poor. He expects

letters addressed to him to be postpaid, those who live at a distance and desire his aid will please send a horse for him."

On the eve of the American Revolution the Jewish population numbered about two thousand or three thousand in a total population of approximately three million, or less than one-tenth of one per cent. Most of them were from Spain or Portugal or of Sephardim descent, but quite a few of Ashkenazim descent had come from Germany together with other persecuted German sects, and a small number were from England.

Even though the Jewish communities, concentrated chiefly in a half dozen seaboard cities, were small before the Revolution, individual Jews played an important part in the commercial and social life of the colonies. Jewish merchants were active in the intercolonial and foreign trade and in trade with the Indians. Hayman Levy of the New York firm of Levy, Lyons and Company became the largest fur trader of the colonies. The Jewish merchants of Pennsylvania were exceedingly important in helping to open up the West. Joseph Simon of Lancaster became one of the largest landholders in Pennsylvania and, in fact, in America, his enterprises extending not only in Pennsylvania but to the Ohio and Illinois and to the Mississippi River. The brothers Bernard and Michael Gratz of Philadelphia were among the leading fur traders and land speculators in the colonies, and contributed immeasurably towards the expansion of the frontier.

The foremost Jewish families on the eve of the American Revolution were the Franks, Simon and Gratz families of Pennsylvania, the Sheftall and Minis families of Georgia, the Ettings of Maryland, the Cohens of South Carolina, the Pintos of Connecticut, the Hays and Lopez families of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and the Gomez, Seixas, Simon, Hendricks, Moses and Phillips families of New York.

The most influential Jew in colonial America was undoubtedly Aaron Lopez of Newport. In Portugal, Lopez and his two brothers had lived outwardly as Christians but secretly as Jews. Aaron Lopez arrived in Newport with his wife on October 13, 1752. Beginning as a merchant in the spermaceti candle business,

he gradually built up a lucrative trade in many commodities with Europe, the West Indies and Africa. By 1775, Lopez had a complete or part ownership in over thirty vessels. Ezra Stiles, president of Yale University, said of him:

"He was a Merchant of the first Eminence; for Honor and Extent of Commerce probably surpassed by no Merchant in America. He did business with the greatest ease and clearness—always carried about a sweetness of behaviour, a calm urbanity, an agreeable and unaffected politeness of manners. Without a single enemy and the most universally beloved by an extensive acquaintance of any man I ever knew."

2. Jews and the American Revolution

DURING the American Revolution the vast majority of the Jews rendered distinguished service in the cause of freedom, fighting with uncompromising zeal to free their country from British domination. The Jewish people actively participated in the momentous events culminating in the American War for Independence. Owing to the fact that most Jews were merchants and tradesmen they were among the first to feel the disastrous effects of British repressive measures. The continuance and enforcement of these restrictions would have destroyed the economic prospects of most of the Jewish people in America. Thus the British laws which required the Americans to trade only with the British West Indies threatened to destroy the profitable trade Jewish merchants had developed with the French, Spanish and Dutch West Indies. At the same time the Royal Proclamation of 1763 forbidding settlement west of the Appalachian mountains struck a heavy blow at the prospects of Jewish traders and land speculators.

The Jews threw in their lot with the progressive upsurge of the American people early in the Revolutionary movement. When the Stamp Act was passed in 1765, every Jewish merchant in New York agreed not to import goods subject to the provisions of that law. Meanwhile, in Philadelphia, nine Jewish traders^{*} joined others to adopt the non-importation resolutions by which

^{*}The signers included Benjamin Levy, Samson Levy, Joseph Jacobs, Hyman Levy, Jr., David Franks, Mathias Bush, Bernard Gratz, Michael Gratz, and Moscs Mordecai.

they agreed "not to have any goods shipped from Great Britain until after the repeal of the Stamp Act." Five years later, in 1770, when an attempt was made in New York to strengthen the Non-Importation Resolutions, a number of Jewish merchants again attached their names to the agreement.*

The enforcement of the non-importation agreements was largely in the hands of the Sons of Liberty, an organization formed in the latter part of 1765. Composed mainly of mechanics, artisans and day laborers, this body served as the spearhead of the movement to free the colonies from England and to establish greater democracy in America. Relying on direct action rather than on petitions to Parliament, the Sons of Liberty pushed forward the revolutionary movement by prodding those members of the mercantile, landed and professional aristocracy who wished to advance slowly, and pushing aside those conservatives who feared the democratic objectives of the common people.

The Sons of Liberty attracted the support of a number of Jews, the most notable of whom was Haym Salomon, soon to become the greatest financier of the Revolution. He was born at Lisa, Poland, in 1740, of Jewish-Portuguese ancestry. At the age of thirty he became an ardent advocate of Polish independence, and a close friend of Kosciusko and Pulaski, Polish patriots and supporters of the American Revolution. In 1772 the partition of Poland by Tsarist Russia and autocratic Prussia and Austria took place. Simultaneously, a series of pogroms against the Jews was launched.

After participating in unsuccessful insurrections in his native land, Salomon came to New York in 1772. There he met Alexander McDougall, Isaac Sears, and John Lamb, leaders of the New York Sons of Liberty. They soon became fast friends, and McDougall undoubtedly influenced Salomon to join the Liberty Boys. Thus, while rising into the ranks of the mercantile elements by opening a brokerage and commission merchants' business in New York, Salomon did not hesitate to cast his lot with the mechanics and day laborers. The Sons of Liberty were bitterly condemned by many members of the "better classes," but

^{*} The Jewish merchants who signed the compact were Samuel Judah, Hyman Levy, Jacob Moses, Jacob Myers, Jonas Phillips, and Isaac Seixas.

Salomon's previous association with the cause of liberty in his native land drew the ardent Polish-Jewish patriot naturally to the side of the common people in America who were struggling to overthrow "Tyranny at home and abroad."

While Haym Salomon was working with the Liberty Boys in New York, Francis Salvador, the Jewish plantation owner of South Carolina, who was known as "the Southern Paul Revere," was playing a similar role in a different section of the country. Raised in luxury in England and inheriting a fortune of £60,000, Salvador arrived in South Carolina in December, 1773. He immediately allied himself with the Revolutionary patriots. So active was he in the patriotic cause, that he was elected a member of the General Assembly in South Carolina in 1775—one year after his arrival in the colony. At about the same time, he was chosen by the inhabitants of South Carolina as a delegate to the Provincial Congress, the body that co-ordinated revolutionary activity throughout the colony. Shortly after he assumed his seat, he was appointed to serve on a committee to carry out the provisions of the Articles passed by the Provincial Congress, which stated that the colonists "were entitled to life, liberty and property, and that they had never ceded to any sovereign power whatever a right to dispose of either without their consent." Salvador was also sent by the Congress to persuade Tories to join the Revolutionary movement. Rev. Dr. Tennent, who headed one such mission to the Tories, wrote in September, 1775: "In my efforts I was ably seconded by Mr. Salvador." And David Fanning, a Tory colonel in the Revolutionary War, noted the following in his diary under the date of July, 1775:

"But at the time appointed, instead of meeting a minister, we all went to meet two Jews by name of Silvedoor [sic] and Repley, and after making many speeches in favor of the rebel lion and used all their endeavors to delude the people away, at last presented rebellion papers to see who would sign them. They were severely reprimanded by Henry O'Neil and many others. It came so high that they had much ado to get off with their lives."

Salvador was the first Jew to give his life in the Revolutionary

cause. On August 1, 1776, less than a month after the Declaration of Independence was signed, he was killed in a battle against the Tories and Indians who had been invited by the British.* Only twenty-nine years old when he died, his loss was keenly felt by the patriots. As Judge William Drayton, leader of the South Carolina movement, put it: "Salvador was intimately known and esteemed by the first revolutionary characters of South Carolina." "The whole army regretted his loss," added a contemporary journal, *The Rembrancer*, "as he was universally loved and esteemed by them."

Of the two to three thousand Jews in America on the eve of the War for Independence only a very small portion were men young enough to bear arms. In light of these circumstances, the fact that as many as a hundred Jews served as regular troops and militiamen during the American War of Liberation, reveals the deep attachment of this numerically insignificant group for the Revolutionary cause. Several military units had a relatively high percentage of Jews. In South Carolina, for example, there was a "Jews' Company," commanded by Captain Richard Lushington. The name derived from the fact that this voluntary company had been recruited from a section of Charleston in which Jews predominated and that a high percentage of its members—ten to fifteen out of a full complement of sixty men—were Jews.

Jewish soldiers served with honor and distinction on the field of battle. Philip Moses Russell, who enlisted as a surgeon's mate in the spring of 1775 and left the army in 1780 because of an illness contracted at Valley Forge, was commended by Washington for his "assiduous and faithful attention to the sick and wounded." Asher Pollock of Newport who enlisted in 1777 remained in the Continental Army for more than six years. At the end of the war he was mustered out and awarded "two honorary badges for faithful services." Benjamin Nones, a French

* Salvador's military activities did not represent the first instance of Jewish participation in the armed forces in America. At the opening of the French and Indian War in 1757, Isaac Myers of New York called a town meeting at the Rising Sun Inn and set up a company of soldiers of which he was chosen captain. Joseph Simon distinguished himself in a battle with the Indians at Bloody Run in 1763, and Aaron Hart fought with the Army invading Canada.

Jew, came from Bordeaux, France, expressly for the purpose of volunteering in the American Revolutionary Army. He saw service under Generals Pulaski, Washington and Lafayette. Captain Verdier reported on December 15, 1779:

"Benjamin Nones has served as a volunteer in my company during the campaign of this year and at the siege of Savannah in Georgia and his behavior under fire in all the bloody actions we fought have been marked by the bravery and courage which a military man is expected to show for the liberties of his country, and which acts of said Nones gained him the favor and esteem of General Pulaski, as well as that of all the officers who witnessed his daring conduct."

In recognition of his "bravery and courage," Nones was promoted to the rank of Major of a Legion of 400 made up in part of Jews. So many Jews were promoted from the ranks for distinguished service in battle that by the end of the war fully one-half of the Jews who served in the regular army were officers, some with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

Nothing illustrates the patriotic spirit of the Jewish Revolutionary soldier better than does the following letter sent by Solomon Bush of Philadelphia to a friend in the South sometime after he had been severely wounded in battle:

"I am, thank God, better and have the satisfaction to have my limb perfectly straight. My wishes are to be able to get satisfaction and revenge the wrongs of my injured country. I wish you joy of our troops to the northward and hope to tell you New York is ours before long. . . ."

Besides fighting, the Jews helped the Revolution financially, contributing substantial funds to the winning of the war. The brothers Bernard and Michael Gratz helped equip the Northwestern expedition of George Rogers Clark. Because of his Revolutionary sentiments, Isaac Moses, a New York merchant, was forced to escape to Philadelphia immediately upon the capture of New York by the British. Throughout his stay in Philadelphia he gave financial aid to the patriots. At one time, when the outlook was darkest for the Revolutionary cause, he

gave his personal bond for £3,000 for provisioning the army. Manuel Mordecai Noah, who served on Washington's staff, furnished \$10,000 to the Continental Army. Moses M. Hays of Boston was always ready to contribute financially to the war effort. On June 10, 1782, Robert Morris, Superintendent of the Office of Finance, thanked Hays for his offer of assistance, and added "that the present situation of the public business does not require the assistance you so kindly offered."

No one man, of course, was responsible for the successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War. But Haym Salomon, almost single-handed, kept up the bankrupt Revolutionary government's credit. As a Senate Committee pointed out in 1850, Salomon "gave great assistance by loans of money and by advancing liberally of his means to sustain the men engaged in the struggle for independence at a time when the sinews of war were essential to success."

When the British captured New York, Salomon was arrested and charged with conspiring with the Revolutionists. Learning of his amazing knowledge of languages—he knew ten—his captors released him in order to use him as an interpreter among their Hessian mercenaries. In this work Salomon rendered a great deal of aid to American prisoners, and propagandized the Hessians by telling them of Washington's offer of a hundred acres of good land to every Hessian who deserted to the American cause. A good number immediately went over to the Continental Army.

On the night of August 5, 1778, Salomon was again arrested and imprisoned in the Provost Jail, the most dreaded of the British prisons. A few days later he was court-martialed and charged with using his home to assist the escape of American prisoners, with sheltering spies, with communicating with the Continental Army, with assisting Washington in a plot to burn the King's fleet in the Harbor of New York, and with using his position as an interpreter for the Hessian troops to promote desertion and treason. He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to be hanged.

By morning, Salomon and his Hessian guard had escaped. There are various conjectures about how the escape was accom-

plished, but it is most likely that the Sons of Liberty, led by Alexander McDougall, effected his release.

Leaving his wife and baby in New York, Salomon made his way to Philadelphia. In a few years he became a leading broker in the city, and one of the largest depositors in the Bank of North America. But his funds did not remain long in that institution, for he loaned or gave the Revolutionary government \$658,007.43, of which \$210,000 was in specie. The notebook of Robert Morris shows not less than 75 transactions in which Salomon advanced funds in one way or another.* He advanced \$20,000 to pay the salaries of men holding public office in order to keep them in service, and made many advances during the war to army officers, to foreign agents, and for the outfitting of soldiers. Among those who received such loans were James Madison, James Wilson, Joseph Reed, James Monroe, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Edmund Randolph, Baron Von Steuben and General Mifflin. Madison frequently wrote of the "Kindness of our little friend in Front Street," who rejected "all recompense" on the ground that the "price of money is so usurious that . . . it ought to be extorted from none but those that aim at a profitable speculation."

To all who came with requests for financial aid for the patriotic cause, Salomon replied: "Draw on me for any sum by post or express, it shall be honoured at sight, let the amount be ever so great. The bills may be drawn on New York or London if they are endorsed by their commanding officers."

In addition to all this, Salomon served as paymaster of the French troops in America, and negotiated the war subsidies from France and Holland "on his own personal security without the

* The following entries recorded in Morris' diary under different dates are typical: "Sent for Mr. Salomon, the Broker . . . Haym Salomon called this day to inform me of some circumstances relative to Bills of Exchange . . . Salomon the Broker came and I urged him to leave no stone unturned to find out money—or the means by which I can obtain it . . . I sent for Mr. Haym Salomon to consult respecting the sale of Bills. And find the French agents continue to undersell me, therefore must wait . . . Mr. Haym Salomon respecting Bills of Exchange. I consulted him about raising the price, he advises me to secure a good deal of money first as he thinks an attempt to raise the Price will stop the sale for some time and I am of the same opinion."

loss of a cent to the country and required a commission of only $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% for his invaluable services." He was appointed "Broker to the office of Finance of the United States" as well as Broker to the French consul and Treasurer of the French Army.

When Robert Morris needed a substantial sum to buy supplies for the soldiers, he sent a courier to Salomon. The story is told that the messenger arrived in Philadelphia while Salomon was participating in Yom Kippur services. The messenger appeared at the synagogue and informed Salomon of the urgent need of the government for money. Without a word he returned to his place in the synagogue and asked his fellow-worshippers. "But it's Yom Kippur," replied one. "But it's the cause," Salomon replied. This was enough. The money was quickly raised and the next day turned over to Morris.

On June 21, 1783, Salomon and several other leading Jews of Philadelphia * signed a petition, written by Thomas Paine, to the Continental Congress, promising to raise funds needed to pay the soldiers:

"We do not amuse the World," it went, "with calling on Congress to do justice to the Army and to the creditors of America, and yet withhold the means by which that justice is to be fulfilled. On the contrary, we freely offer ourselves to bear our share in any National measure to effect those purposes and to establish the character of America equal to her rank."

Some Jews suffered severe losses chiefly on account of their adherence to the American cause. The business of nearly all the Jewish merchants of Newport was wrecked when the British captured most of their vessels. When Haym Salomon died in 1785 his family was left practically penniless, while the government owed his estate as much as \$350,000, none of which was ever repaid.** David Hays, a Westchester County merchant, had

* Those who joined Haym Salomon in signing this document were Isaac Franks, Isaac Levy, Isaac Moses, Moses Cohen, Seymour Hart, Jonas Phillips, Moses Levy, Joseph Israel, and Jacob Simpson.

** On several occasions, notably in 1846 and in 1850, Congressional Committees discussed the claim and reported back favorably. But nothing ever came of it. On December 15, 1941, however, Salomon finally received the recognition he so justly deserved. In Chicago on that day the George

his house burned to the ground simply because he fought on the patriot side. Mordecai Sheftell, Chairman of the Rebel Parochial Committee to supervise internal affairs in Savannah, was disqualified by the British authorities from all civil rights, and other Jewish patriots in Georgia were deprived of the right of holding any office or engaging in business.

David S. Franks of Montreal had his fortune swept away by confiscation because he had aided the American troops during their invasion in Canada. After being imprisoned on the charge of having "zealously served the rebels in the winter of 1775-1776," Franks joined the retreating American Army and devoted the remainder of the war to active service in the armed forces, rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In a letter to George Washington, dated May 12, 1789, Colonel Franks pointed out with considerable pride:

"I have devoted eleven years of the best part of my life to the Service of my Country, in all which time I am bold to say that I have ever been actuated by a disinterested zeal for her Honor and Prosperity."

Naturally, all Jews did not ally themselves with the patriots. Some of the richer ones, fearing a movement which aimed to secure greater freedom for the common people in America as well as to free the Colonies from British domination, became Tories. David Franks, one of the Philadelphia merchants who had signed the original non-importation agreements, became a prominent Tory and was charged with giving secret aid to the enemy. In July, 1780, the state of Rhode Island passed an act of banishment against those who had "left this State and joined the

Washington - Robert Morris - Haym Salomon monument was unveiled. In August, 1936, when the plan for such a monument was announced by the Patriotic Foundation of Chicago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote: "It was never disputed that at a critical period in the affairs of the Revolution, Haym Salomon came to the rescue of the Continental Congress with loans freely extended. The debt of gratitude which the Nation owes Salomon's memory will in part be paid through the fulfillment of plans of the Patriotic Foundation to erect in Chicago a monument which will portray Salomon with his fellow patriots, George Washington and Robert Morris. I bespeak for the undertaking the fullest measure of success."

enemies thereof." Included in the list was Isaac Hart, wealthy Jewish merchant of Newport who was a Tory. In 1776 when New York fell into British hands, fifteen Jews joined with others in signing a loyal address to Sir William Howe and his brother, Lord Howe. Abraham Wagg, one of the fifteen, served in the British militia, and in 1778, engaged in propaganda for the King by urging the Americans to end their alliance with France and agree to a negotiated peace with England.

But most Jews refused to live under the rule of the hated redcoats and moved away once their cities were captured, leaving behind their wealth and property. In Ezra Stiles' diary there is a list of those who remained in Newport after the capture by the British in 1777. Only a few Jewish names are on it; the vast majority of the Jews had fled with other American sympathizers.

About the same time an entire congregation of Jews left New York City, refusing to live under British control despite tempting offers by the enemy. Leading the migration was Gershom Mendes Seixas, minister of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, Shearith Israel. From the very outset of the Revolutionary struggle, Rabbi Seixas had espoused the patriot cause. "Having once come to the conclusion that the principles of the revolutionary party were righteous," writes Leon Hühner, "he voluntarily threw himself into the struggle, preaching those principles from his pulpit and using all his powers of persuasion and his influence in behalf of the patriot cause." Other members of his family performed active service in the Revolutionary Army. His brother, Benjamin Seixas, was a member of the patriot militia in New York, and later joined Isaac Moses of Philadelphia in equipping and sending out American privateers to prey on British vessels.* Another brother, Abraham Seixas, was a lieu-

* In his study, *Naval Records of the American Revolution, 1775-1778*, C. H. Lincoln lists the names of close to twenty Jews who were interested in privateering during the Revolution. The importance of this combination to the winning of the war is admirably set forth by E. S. Maclay, who writes in *A History of American Privateering* (p. 206): "Had it not been for our privateers, the Stars and Stripes would have been for all practical purposes swept from the seas. It was the astonishing development of this form of maritime warfare that enabled the struggling colonists to hold their own on the ocean."

tenant in the Continental Army, serving in the Georgia line during the entire struggle.

Directly after the British troops occupied New York, Rabbi Seixas urged his congregation to close the doors of the synagogue and leave the Tory city. His advice was endorsed by a majority of his congregation who voted to move from the city. Most of the congregation went to Philadelphia, but Gershom Seixas took the scroll of the law and the ceremonials belonging to the synagogue and went to Stratford, Connecticut. In 1780 the members of his congregation who had gone to Philadelphia invited Rabbi Seixas to come from Connecticut and preside over their synagogue in the City of Brotherly Love. Bringing with him the synagogue scroll and the articles of ceremonial that had belonged to Shearith Israel in New York, Rabbi Seixas joined Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. The majority of the members of this Jewish synagogue had come from New York City, leaving behind most of their earthly possessions.* In 1784, after the British had left the city, Rabbi Seixas and his followers returned to New York. One of the first things the congregation did was to draw up an address of loyalty to Governor Clinton.

Despite the notable contributions of Jews to the cause of American freedom and independence, they were sometimes subjected during the war to unjustified attacks which cast doubt on their patriotism. In the *South Carolina and American General Gazette* of December 3, 1776, a writer, who signed himself "An American," charged that he had met a large company "of the Tribe of Israel—who, after taking every advantage in trade the times admitted of in the State of Georgia, as soon as it was attacked by an enemy, fled here for an asylum, with their ill-got wealth—dastardly turning their backs upon the country when in danger, which gave them bread and protection." This obviously anti-Semitic attack did not go unanswered. Several citizens of Georgia denounced the charge as a complete false-

* When Moses Gomez, a member of the Congregation, died in 1789, the *New York Daily Gazette* (April 13, 1789) commented: "He was religious, hospitable, humane and generous, and a staunch friend of freedom, as was evinced by his relinquishing a very considerable property and residing among the friends of the Revolution during the late war."

hood, and one correspondent who signed himself "A real American and Truehearted Israelite," wrote in the *Gazette* in reply:

"I am apt to think, Mr. Printer, that the gentleman is either very blind, or he is willing to make himself so; for I am well convinced, had he taken the trouble of going closer to the chairs, he would have found that what he thus publicly asserted was erroneous and a palpable mistake, as he might have been convinced they were of the female kind, with their dear babes, who had happily arrived at an asylum, where a tyrannical enemy was not at theirs or their dear offsprings heels. I do, therefore, in vindication of many a worthy Israelite now in Georgia, assert that there is not, at this present hour, a single Georgia Israelite in Charles Town; and that so far to the contrary of that gentleman's assertion, I do declare to the Publick, that many merchants of that State were here on the 22d ult, and on being informed of the enemy landing, they instantly left this, as many a worthy Gentile knows, and proceeded post haste to Georgia; leaving all concerns unsettled, and are now with their brother citizens in the field, doing that which every honest American should do."

What "A real American and Truehearted Israelite" said of the Jews of Georgia and South Carolina could be said of the vast majority of the Jews in this country during the American Revolution.

3. Jews and Jeffersonian Democracy

BY THEIR distinguished services during the American Revolution the Jewish people had helped to lay the basis for the establishment of a government dedicated to the democratic principle that "all men are created equal." To that government, Jews the world over began to turn in the belief that here in the new American Republic they might obtain religious freedom and economic security. In 1787, for example, a Jew in Germany addressed a letter to the President of the Congress of the United States, relating in detail the burdens imposed upon his co-religionists in that country and appealing for an opportunity for them to settle the frontier in America:

"In the treaty concluded with England by the American states," he wrote, "many of us have read with great interest of the vast stretches of land which are to be cleared and which have next to no inhabitants. More than a century must elapse before the inhabitants of the United States will so multiply that they will be in a position to occupy and cultivate the land which lies east of the uninhabited areas. . . . Shall dirt accumulate on the new stretches of land during those hundred years, or shall they remain an oversized hunting domain for the few? Your religion cannot forbid you to grant us these lands for agricultural purposes, since you now tolerate Jews among you. . . . We ask nothing more than to become subjects of the thirteen states, to pay gladly a double tax for the best of these lands. We only desire to receive permission for this outlay on our part to found colonies and to engage in agriculture, trade, and the arts and services."

The Constitution of the United States, especially after the Bill

of Rights was added, was hailed by Jews throughout the world.* The very first amendment to the Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion, and prohibited Congress from establishing any church as the privileged religion of the Nation. Furthermore, Article VI, Section 3, provided that "no religious test shall ever be required as to qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

By ignoring all sects, the Constitution secured to the Jews real equality as citizens of the United States. Nor was freedom for the Jews conferred, as in some European countries, by special acts passed in their behalf. They were not regarded as a separate body, for whom separate and distinct laws had to be framed. For the first time since their dispersion, the liberty of their religion had been guaranteed to them—not as Jews but as citizens. That such was the real intention of those who framed the Constitution is made evident by George Washington's reply to the Address of the Newport Jews congratulating him upon his election as the first President of the United States under the Constitution. In this famous answer, he emphasized the equality of all American citizens irrespective of creed:

"All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that *toleration* is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For, happily, the government of the United States which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens. . . .

"May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid."

Washington felt especially proud of the fact that it was his own State of Virginia that had led the way during the Revolutionary era in establishing religious equality. Initiated by Thomas Jefferson and carried into enactment by James Madison

* In the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of July 9, 1788 is an account of the great demonstration in Philadelphia to hail the ratification of the Federal Constitution. The writer points out that in the parade were "the clergy of different Christian denominations with the rabbi of the Jews walking arm in arm."

in 1785, the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom broke down all religious barriers.* Other states, influenced by the ideals of the War for Independence, also removed religious restrictions on voting and office-holding. The New York State Constitution of 1777 proclaimed that "the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed within this State to all mankind."

Unfortunately, discriminatory laws against Jews still existed in several states. New Hampshire, for example, excluded Jews and Catholics from many public offices. In North Carolina, moreover, no person who denied "the Truth of the Protestant religion or the Divine Authority of the Old or New Testament" could hold any office in the state.

As in the days of Asser Levy the Jewish people fought discrimination vigorously. Rabbi Gershom Seixas led a movement to eliminate a clause in the Pennsylvania constitution requiring all assemblymen to declare their faith in both the Old and New Testaments. This requirement, known as the "Test Act," virtually prevented Jews from serving in the legislature. On December 23, 1783, the Jewish Congregation of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia submitted a "Petition for Political Justice to the Jews" to the Pennsylvania legislature. Drawn up and signed by Rabbi Seixas, Haym Salomon and other Jews in Philadelphia, the remonstrance was a bold assertion of the fundamental principles of liberty. It characterized the clause as "a stigma upon their nation and their religion," and "unjust to the members of a persuasion that had always been attached to the American cause and given a support to the country, some in the militia, and some by cheerfully paying taxes and sustaining the popular cause." The Jews, the petition reminded the legislature, had "distinguishedly suffered for their attachment to the Revolution principles . . . [and] experienced the most severe resentments of the British commanders." The petition asked, therefore, for a discontinuance of the religious test contained in the constitution.

This protest, Thompson Westcott writes in his history of the

* In 1790 the sixth organized Jewish community in America was formed at Richmond, Virginia.

"test laws" of Pennsylvania, "had its influence in procuring the subsequent modification of the test clause in the Constitution." The actual modification, however, did not take place until several years after the petition was drawn up. In September 1787 Jonas Phillips, a leader of the Jewish community in Philadelphia, petitioned the Federal Convention which was drawing up a new frame of government for the United States, in the belief that this body could eliminate the test clause from the Pennsylvania state constitution.

"It is well known that among all the citizens of the 13 united states that the Jews have been true and faithful whigs, & during the late contest with England they have been foremost in aiding and assisting the states with their lives & fortunes, they have supported the cause, have bravely fought and bled for liberty which they cannot enjoy.—

"Therefore if the honourable convention shall in their wisdom think fit and alter said oath & leave out the words to viz—and I do acknowledge the scripture of the new testament to be given by divine inspiration, then the Israelites will think themselves happy to live under a government where all Religious societys are on an equal footing—I solicit this favour for myself, my children & posterity, & for the benefit of all the Israelites throughout the 13 united states of America."

In the Constitutional Convention of 1789-1790 the "Test Act" was eliminated from the Pennsylvania Constitution. The new Constitution, proclaimed in 1790, permitted all men, regardless of their religious affiliations, to hold office. As a result the Jews were given rights in Pennsylvania similar to those enjoyed by other citizens.

During the 1790's a number of Jews began to play a significant role in the democratic movement led by Thomas Jefferson. Particularly important was their activity in the Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790's, composed largely of mechanics, tradesmen and day laborers in the cities and small farmers in the countryside, which rapidly became the backbone of the Jeffersonian movement. Solomon Simpson was president and Jacob Montaigne vice-president of the New York Democratic Society. Israel Israel was a leader in the strongest popular club in the nation, the Philadelphia Democratic-Republican Society. He

worked hand-in-hand with David Rittenhouse, world-famous scientist; Charles Biddle, prominent merchant; Alexander J. Dallas, Secretary of State in Pennsylvania, all of whom were also members.

Convinced that the success of the French Revolution was closely linked with the success of democracy in America, these popular clubs celebrated such French holidays as July 14, the day the Bastille fell, and September 22, the day the French Republic was proclaimed. The Jewish members of the societies joined heartily with their Gentile brothers in these celebrations. In addition to feeling with them a strong bond of solidarity with the democratic forces in France, they also hailed the fact that only during the French Revolution were the 40,000 Jews who lived in France granted political and civil rights. The influence of the acts of Jewish Emancipation in France, they knew, would be felt the world over.

Terrified by the growth of the democratic movement, reactionary Federalists and their newspapers unleashed a virtual reign of terror against the people. Every effort was made to create the idea that Jefferson and his followers were agents of a foreign power. The Federalists accused the democratic clubs of being associated with an international organization, known as the Bavarian Illuminati, which from its headquarters in Europe proposed to subvert government, morality, and religion. Anti-Semitism was also a feature of the attack of coterie of corrupt Federalist politicians upon the democratic movement. One Federalist sneered that the members of the New York Democratic-Republican Society "all seem, like their Vice-President, of the tribe of Shylock." Another said in describing the democratic movement in Pennsylvania in 1797: "A Jewish Tavern Keeper, with a very Jewish name (viz. Israel Israel) is chosen one of the Senators of this commonwealth for the city of Philadelphia solely on account of his violent attachment to the French Interests."* And on August 5, 1800, the *Federalist Gazette of the United States & Daily Advertiser* carried an account of a "Jacobin" mass meeting on behalf of Thomas Jefferson, the presidential candidate of the

* Chas. Nisbet to Charles Wallace, Dec. 11, 1797, Nisbet Letters, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division.

Democratic-Republican Party, held a week before at the State House in Philadelphia. This meeting, said the reporter, was "composed of the very refuse and filth of society," two of whom were a Negro scornfully called Citizen Sambo and a Jew described with equal scorn as "Citizen N——." The latter undoubtedly referred to Benjamin Nones, a prominent member of the Jewish community and veteran of the Revolutionary War.

Progressive Americans, Jew and Gentile alike, did not take these anti-Semitic attacks lightly. Answering the Federalist who had attacked the New York Democratic-Republican Society and its Jewish vice-president, one Jeffersonian wrote in a letter to the *New York Journal & Patriotic Register* of December 19, 1795:

"If by the word Shylock, you mean a Jew, from my knowledge of the Vice President, I dare say he would think himself honoured by the appellation, Judaism being his religious profession, as Democracy is his political creed."

Benjamin Nones also gloried in his Judaism and in his political creed in his letter to Mr. Wayne, printer of *The Gazette of the United States & Daily Advertiser*, in which he answered its reporter's charge that he was a Jew, a Republican, and poor. Reflecting the views of most progressive Jews at the time, Nones wrote:

"I am a Jew. I glory in belonging to that persuasion. I am a Jew . . . and so were Abraham and Isaac, and Moses and the prophets and so too were Christ and his apostles; and I feel no disgrace in ranking with such society. . . .

"I am a Jew, and if for no other reason, for that reason am I a Republican. Among the pious priesthood of church establishments, we are compassionately ranked with Turks, infidels and heretics. In the monarchies of Europe we are hunted from society, stigmatized as unworthy of common civility, thrust out as it were from the converse of men: objects of mockery and insult to forward children, the butts of vulgar and low buffoonery. . . .

"Among the nations of Europe we are inhabitants everywhere but citizens nowhere—unless in republics. Here, in France, and in the Batavian Republic alone, we are treated as men and as brethren. In republics we have rights, in monarchies we live but to experience wrongs."

Nine years after this vigorous defense of fundamental demo-

cratic principles, another Jew made a profound impression on progressive Americans by a brilliant reply to narrow-minded bigots. Jacob Henry had been elected a member of the legislature of North Carolina in 1808 and re-elected the following year. But when Henry entered the legislative chambers in 1809, a fellow member arose and asked to have his seat declared vacant on account of his faith. Instead of flinching before this anti-Semitic attack, Henry leaped to the offensive and asked the members of the legislature:

"Shall this free country set an example of persecution which even the returning season of enslaved Europe would not submit to? Will you bind the conscience in chains and fasten convictions upon the mind in spite of the conclusions of reason and of those ties and habitudes which are blended with every pulsation of the heart? Are you prepared to plunge at once from the sublime heights of moral legislation into the dark and gloomy caverns of superstitious ignorance? Will you drive from your shores and from the shelters of your constitution, all who do not lay their oblations on the same altar, observe the same ritual, and subscribe to the same dogmas?"

Henry's speech so deeply impressed the legislators that he was immediately seated. Furthermore, all over the country there was considerable discussion of the basic queries raised by the forthright Jewish legislator of North Carolina. For many years thereafter his address in reply to an anti-Semitic attack was included in all collections of great American speeches.

In their battle against discrimination and prejudice, the Jewish people gained the support of outstanding American progressives. Thomas Jefferson, for example, expressed vigorous opposition to popular prejudices and discriminations which limited the opportunity of Jews to take their proper place in American life as full-fledged citizens. Thus he wrote to Mordecai M. Noah on May 28, 1818:

"I thank you for the discourse on the consecration of the Synagogue in your city, with which you have been pleased to favor me. I have read it with pleasure and instruction, having learned from it some valuable facts in Jewish history which I did not know before. Your sect by its sufferings has furnished a remarkable proof of the universal spirit of religious intolerance inherent

in every sect, disclaimed by all while feeble, and practiced by all when in power. Our laws have applied the only antidote to this vice, protecting our religious, as they do our civil rights, by putting all on an equal footing. But more remains to be done, for although we are free by the law, we are not so in practice; public opinion erects itself into an Inquisition, and exercises its offices with as much fanaticism as fans the flames of an Auto-da-Fe.

"The prejudices still scowling on your section of our religion, although the elder one, cannot be unfelt by yourselves; it is to be hoped that individual dispositions will at length mould themselves to the model of the law, and consider the moral basis, on which all our religions rest, as the rallying point which united them in a common interest; while the peculiar dogmas branching from it are the exclusive concern of the respective sects embracing them, and no rightful subject of notice to any other; public opinion needs reformation on that point, which would have the further happy effect of doing away the hypocritical maxim of *intus et lubet, fortis ut moris*. Nothing, I think, would be so likely to effect this, as to your sect particularly, as the more careful attention to education, which you recommend, and which placing its members on the equal and commanding benches of science will exhibit them as equal objects of respect and favor. I salute you with great respect and esteem."

Thus in peace as well as in war the Jews in early America fought ardently for the essential characteristics of American democracy—for religious freedom, for the equality of all men, and for the right of all people to enjoy a better and happier life. And at all times they won support of all Americans who sincerely believed in freedom and democracy.

4. Jews in the War of 1812

TWO DECADES after the establishment of the American nation the people of our country were called upon to defend its independence on the battlefield. During the Napolconic period, Great Britain stopped American ships on the high seas, impressed American sailors under the pretext that they were British citizens who had joined the merchant marine of the United States, and seized American cargoes bound for European ports. At the same time British agents organized Indian attacks upon frontier settlements from Canada to Florida in the hope of eventually severing the region west of the Alleghenies from the United States. Other agents co-operated with reactionary Federalist politicians and merchants, led by the Essex Junto, in an effort to separate New England from the rest of the country. To eliminate this threat to the existence of the American nation and to maintain the rights of the American Republic as a neutral on the high seas, Congress declared war against Great Britain in June, 1812.

During the war of 1812 the Jewish people again rendered distinguished service to the cause of freedom by fighting to maintain the dignity and independence of the country their fathers had helped to liberate from British domination. Hay M. Salomon, the son of Haym Salomon, was a captain of the 10th Brigade, 115th Regiment; the son of Major Benjamin Nones was a captain of the 10th Brigade, Infantry. In Georgia several sons of Sheftall Sheftall served in the American Army, as did David G. Seixas, son of the ardent Whig patriot, Rev. Gershom Mendes

Seixas. Other Jewish officers in the war of 1812 were Brigadier-General Joseph Bloomfield, who commanded the district comprising Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Western New Jersey; Lieutenant Benjamin Gratz, Lieutenant Isaac Mertz, Colonel Nathan Meyers, Captain Abraham Seixas, and Adjutant Isaac Myers of Pennsylvania; Lieutenant David Metzler and Captain Myer Moses of South Carolina; Captain Mordecai Myers of New York, and Major Abraham A. Massias of Georgia. Major Massias headed the famous brigade which repulsed the repeated efforts of the British to enter Georgia from the sea. Mrs. St. Julien Ravenal in her biography of William Lowndes points out in writing of the battle:

"The enemy attacked Point Peter on the St. Mary's sending 1,500 men in boats up the river for that purpose, but the fortifications were good and the garrison under Major Massias made so brave a show that the English concluded that the post was too strong to be carried, and withdrew."

Few officers during the War of 1812 won the praise accorded Captain Mordecai Myers for bravery in battle. When it appeared that war was inevitable, Myers initiated a campaign to raise volunteer companies. In March, 1812, he was commissioned a Captain in the 13th Pennsylvania Infantry, and served with distinction under Colonel Peter B. Schuyler, General Henry Dearborn, and General James Wilkinson. While under the latter's command, Captain Myers received nation-wide praise for his courage during rescue operations on Lake Ontario. In an account of the incident in his *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812*, Benson J. Lossing devoted considerable space to the part played by Captain Myers:

"Captain Mordecai Myers was very active in saving lives and property during this boisterous weather. It was resolved to send back to Sacketts Harbor all those who could then endure active service in the campaign. Nearly 200 of these were put on board two schooners with hospital stores. The vessels were wrecked and Captain Myers, at his own solicitation, was sent by Gen. John Parker Boyd with two large boats for the rescue of the passengers and men. He found the schooners filled on their sides, the sail

flapping and the sea breaking over them. Many had perished and most of those alive, having drunk freely of liquor among the hospital stores, were nearly all intoxicated. The hatches were open and the vessels were half filled with water. By great exertion and personal risk, Capt. Myers succeeded in taking to the shore nearly all the 200 persons who had embarked on the schooner. Forty or fifty were dead."

Captain Myers was severely wounded in an engagement during the Canadian campaign. Nevertheless, he continued to perform "laborious and gallant service" until 1815 when the disability produced by his wound led to his honorable discharge from the armed forces.

Meanwhile, Jewish patriots were also distinguishing themselves for their heroism on the high seas. Uriah P. Levy, later Commodore Levy, was Master of the Brig. of War *Argus* and in the battle with the *Pelican* in the English Channel, was captured and confined for a while in the prison of Dartmoor.* For running the blockade to France and destroying twenty-one British merchantmen the Common Council of New York paid tribute to Levy by bestowing upon him the freedom of the city.

Commodore John Ordronaux, a French Jewish privateersman, gained renown for his bravery and ability during the battle between the British forty-gun frigate *Endymion* and the tiny armed ship *Prince de Neufchâtel*. E. S. Maclay, historian of the American Navy, presents a vivid picture of the part Ordronaux played in that important naval battle:

"Captain Ordronaux," he writes, "himself fired some eighty shots at the enemy. Springing up the sides of the vessel, the British would endeavor to gain her deck but every attempt was met by deadly blows by the sturdy defenders. It was well understood that Captain Ordronaux had avowed his determination of never being taken alive and that he would blow up his ship with all hands before striking his colors. At one period of the

* At the time of his death in 1862, Levy was the highest ranking officer in the United States Navy. He won great fame for his persistent campaign to abolish corporal punishment in the Navy. On his tombstone are the words: "He was the father of the law for the abolition of the barbarous practice of corporal punishment in the Navy of the United States."

fighting when the British had gained the deck and were gradually driving the Americans back, Ordronaux seized a lighted match, ran to the companion way, directly over the magazine, and called out to his men that he would blow up the ship if they retreated further. The threat had the desired effect. Such a sanguinary fight could not be of long duration and at the end of twenty minutes the English cried out for quarter, upon which the Americans ceased their fighting."

On the home front, too, Jewish patriots contributed to the defense of the Nation. And these contributions were sorely needed. Reactionary Federalists were busily engaged in sabotaging the war effort, believing that an American defeat would enable them to crush Jeffersonian democracy. Federalist governors in New England refused requests of the national government for militia from these states. Federalist businessmen carried on an extensive trade with the enemy; indeed, so extensive was this trade that the British themselves admitted that "were it not for these supplies," their forces in Canada "would soon be suffering from famine." Meantime, Federalist merchants and bankers turned a deaf ear to appeals for funds for their country. "The sale of government bonds in the northern cities," write Charles and Mary Beard, "was deliberately subjected to capitalistic sabotage and the sinews of war withheld from a government fighting for its life."

Fortunately, a few patriotic merchants refused to join in these "fifth column" activities. Among them were a number of prominent Jewish merchants of New York. In 1813 these merchants, led by Herman Hendricks, raised and loaned \$40,000 to the government. The sum was by no means sufficient to meet the financial needs of the day, but it did give heart to other patriotic merchants who were waiting for some businessmen to defy the Federalists and rally to support the war effort.

But Rabbi Gershom Mendes Seixas of New York accomplished more for the patriotic cause by a simple yet stirring sermon than could any amount of financial assistance. The courageous minister, who had refused to remain in New York during the Revolutionary War as long as it was in the hands of the enemy, was not one to remain silent while traitors were active. In a

sermon to his congregation, Rabbi Seixas attacked defeatism, and urged the people to "stand by the flag and the country" and "to support the President of the United States in the present state of public disaffection."

"To the citizens at large," he went on, "it is sufficient for us to know that our rulers are chosen to be judges on all affairs concerning the welfare of their constituents. They have declared war, and it is our bounden duty to act as true and faithful citizens to support and preserve the honor, dignity and the independence of the United States of America, that they may bear equal rank among the nations of the earth."

These words, uttered on February 2, 1814, were to be remembered by the citizens of New York some months later when the British were approaching the city following their sacking of Washington. Then it was that the New Yorkers showed that they agreed with Rabbi Seixas and were determined to "stand by the flag and the country." Early in August, 1814, the people of New York rose as one man to defend their city. Jews and Gentiles, men and women, Negro and white, paraded to the East River Ferry and crossed over to Fort Greene in Brooklyn, where they devoted long hours to the building of fortifications. At the same time, they drilled and mastered the art of defensive warfare. Bernard Hart, a Jewish merchant of New York, contributed substantial sums to furnish arms and clothing for the citizen-soldiers, and served as Division Quartermaster of the hastily formed people's army. Another Jew, Samuel Noah, cousin of the famous Jeffersonian democrat, Mordecai M. Noah, trained the citizens' army in defensive warfare and taught the militia the rudiments of military tactics.*

The British flinched before this magnificent defense and abandoned their plans of capturing New York City.

Jews joined Gentiles in defending Baltimore when the British showed signs of invading Maryland. Here too fortifications were quickly erected and the militia speedily equipped and drilled.

* Young Noah was a graduate of West Point and a student of the Napoleonic campaigns. He had just returned from Texas where he had fought on the side of the Mexican revolutionaries in their war of liberation against Spain.

The British bombardment of Fort McHenry found the people of Baltimore prepared, and a British landing party was repulsed after a sharp and bitter struggle. Twenty-six Jews took part in the defense of Fort McHenry, the occasion on which Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star Spangled Banner."

Jewish patriots also participated in the defense of New Orleans under General Andrew Jackson. Indeed, the name of one Jewish patriot, Judah Touro, attracted nation-wide attention. Judah Touro, son of Rabbi Isaac Touro, Minister of the Newport Jewish Congregation, was one of the leading merchants of New Orleans. But when Andrew Jackson called upon the people of New Orleans to rally and defend their city, he thrust aside business affairs and enlisted as a common soldier in the ranks. During the Battle of New Orleans, Touro volunteered to carry shot and shell from the magazine to Humphrey's Battery.

"In his humble, but perilous duty" [writes James Parton in his *Life of Andrew Jackson*], "he was seen actively engaged during the terrible cannonade with which the British opened the day, regardless of the cloud of iron missiles which flew around him, and which made many of the stoutest hearted cling closely to the embankment or seek some shelter. But in the discharge of duty this good man knew no fear and perceived no danger. It was while thus engaged that he was struck in the thigh by a twelve pound shot which produced a ghastly and dangerous wound."

In 1840 Judah Touro again gained nation-wide prominence by his donation of \$10,000 for the erection of the Bunker Hill monument. In this Touro had joined with Amos Lawrence, New England businessman, who had contributed \$10,000 in 1839. It was quite fitting then that the following lines were read at the dedication of the monument:

"Amos and Judah, venerated names!
Patriarch and prophet press their equal claims,
Like generous coursers, running neck and neck,
Each aids the work by giving it a check.
Christian and Jew, they carry out a plan—
For though of different faith, each is in heart a man."

That the Jewish people should have been so active in defend-

ing America during the War of 1812 is hardly surprising. They knew only too well that despite the existence of discriminatory laws in some states, their position in America was vastly superior to that of their kinsmen in the Old World. Hence they were determined to prevent any effort to destroy the young American Republic and reduce it to a colony of a European monarchy. The Jews of Richmond, Virginia, voiced the sentiments of the Jewish people throughout America when they declared shortly after the War of 1812:

"They felt themselves blest that their limbs were free and their hands unshackled to serve the country which looked upon them as children, dear alike with all other persuasions; and they were rejoiced, that feeble as might be their aid, small though their numbers were, they could at least strike one blow against the enemy who threatened the peace of their fireside, for the country, too, was theirs—they were part of the legislative power, alike in the eye of the law, not distinguished by any disqualification because of their belief or religious conduct."

5. The Jewish Community on the Eve of the Civil War

THE JEWISH POPULATION in America on the eve of the Civil War was about 200,000 out of a total population of 30,000,000. About one-fifth, or 40,000 Jews, lived in New York City. But no longer were the Jews of America concentrated only in the coastal cities of Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Savannah and Charleston.

After the Revolution there was a steady trickle of Jews into the West. They went as peddlers, as fur traders, as Indian traders, and as real estate promoters. Far beyond the reaches of the Ohio, north as far as Michigan and Wisconsin, west to the Illinois, and south to New Orleans and Texas, the Jews made their way. Places bearing the names Franks Town, Aaronsburgh, Gratzburg, and so on, were evidence of their pioneering activities.

Gradually little Jewish communities arose in the West. The emergence of such communities in Cincinnati and Chicago is typical of the entire area. Joseph Jonas, a young Jew of English birth, came to Cincinnati in 1816 and set up business as a watchmaker and silversmith.

Jonas enjoyed his contacts with his neighbors, but he longed for the presence of other Jews and hoped that he "might be a nucleus around which the first congregation might be formed to worship the God of Israel in the great Western territory." He sent glowing accounts to his friends and relatives in England of the beauties of the Ohio Valley and the splendid opportunities which the new country afforded. These letters brought results. In 1819 Jonas was joined by other Jews born in England.

As soon as a sufficient number of Jews was settled in the

town, actual steps were taken toward forming a congregation. The congregation B'ne Israel was formed in 1824, and twelve years later the first synagogue in the Northwest Territory was dedicated. Contributions toward the erection of the synagogue were sent by sister congregations in England, the Barbados, Charleston, and Philadelphia.

The small Jewish community in Cincinnati was proud of its achievements. As early as July, 1825, it addressed the Jewish community of Charleston, South Carolina, pointing out that "separated as we are and scattered through the wilds of America . . . we have always performed all in our power to promote Judaism, and for the last four or five years, we have congregated where a few years before nothing was heard but the howling of wild beasts, and the more hideous cry of savage men."

In Illinois the oldest Jewish community is that of Chicago. Jacob Gottlieb, the first Jew who made Chicago his home, arrived in 1830. In 1840 four more co-religionists arrived, and three years later the City Directory listed the names of several Jewish merchants, peddlers, and tailors. The first Jewish farmer in the area was probably Henry Meyer, who purchased 160 acres in the town of Schaumburg, Cook County, from the government and settled on them.

Meyer was also the agent of the Jewish Colonization Society, an organization whose purpose was to place Jews, especially immigrants, on farms in the West.* After Meyer had bought his land from the government, he reported to the Association's central

* Among these colonizing ventures the most interesting was the effort of Mordecai M. Noah to found an asylum of freedom for the Jews of the world in western New York. In 1820, Noah petitioned the New York Assembly to sell him Grand Island in the Niagara River "for the purpose of attempting to have it settled by emigrants of the Jewish religion from Europe." Here Noah proposed to establish the city of Arrat—a "City of Refuge"—for the Jewish people. In 1825 Noah issued a "Proclamation to the Jews" throughout the world, announcing "that an asylum is prepared and hereby offered to them, where they can enjoy that peace, comfort and happiness, which has been denied them, through the intolerance and misgovernment of former ages." "In His [God's] name," he continued, "do I revive, renew and re-establish the Government of the Jewish Nation, under the auspices and protection of the constitution and laws of the United States of America, confirming and perpetuating all our rights and privileges, our name, our rank, and all our power

office in New York that he had found just the place for Jewish settlers. "Chicago opens a vista into a large commercial future," he wrote, "and the land around it which is flowing with milk and honey, is particularly adapted for tillers of the soil." A number of Jews came as a result of this report, but only two settled in the vicinity of Schaumburg; the rest scattered throughout the state and drifted into commercial life.

Many more Jews arrived in 1845 and 1846 and especially in 1849 after the completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal and the Galena and Chicago Railroad. Some of them bought farms already improved, others claimed government land, and still others settled in villages combining farming and commercial life. The largest part, however, remained in Chicago, which was already becoming an important trade center. By 1850 there were more than two hundred Jewish residents in the Windy City. Three years before, in 1847, the first Jewish congregation in Chicago was established under the name of "Congregation of the Men of the West."

It would require a separate volume to tell the full story of the development of each Jewish community in the United States in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. For there were few states in which there did not exist at least one Jewish congregation. The principal congregations were in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Albany, Richmond, Cincinnati, and New Orleans. In *The North Star*, a weekly paper edited and published by Frederick Douglass, the great Negro Abolition-

among the nations of the earth as they existed and were recognized under the government of the Judges. And I hereby enjoin it upon all our pious and venerable Rabbis, our presidents and Elders of Synagogues, Chiefs of Colleges, and Brethren in authority throughout the world, to circulate and make this my proclamation, and give it full publicity, credence and effect."

Nothing came of this grandiose proposal. The rabbis and other responsible leaders of the Jewish community in Europe promptly repudiated the scheme, and denounced Noah for appointing himself leader of the Jewish people throughout the world. Noah himself just as promptly forgot about the whole affair.

See G. Herbert Cone, "New Matter Relating to Mordecai M. Noah," in *American Jewish Historical Society Proceedings*, No. XI, pp. 130-135, and Lewis F. Allen, "Founding of the City of Arrat on Grand Island by Mordecai M. Noah," in *Buffalo Historical Society Publications*, vol. I, 1879, pp. 120-145.

ist, there appeared on May 25, 1849 an extremely interesting account written by Dr. Lilienthal, the chief Rabbi in the United States, describing the process by which new Jewish congregations were formed:

"A single Jew settles in a small town, and there lives, separated from Jews and everything that is Jewish. No one knows that he is a Jew, for he does not observe any Jewish commandment, or ceremony. In process of time, another Jew settles there, and then a third. The sacred period of a New Year arrives, and the Day of Atonement draws nigh; the people think of God, look at their prosperity, and at Him whom they have to thank for it, then cast a glance on their irreligious life, and are ashamed of it. The desire to return to God rises in their hearts; they count themselves, and find that their number amounts to ten; they can form a minyan; one of them proposes that they constitute themselves a congregation, the others cheerfully agree; money is raised, a letter is written to New York, or some other large congregation; they buy a sepher torah, tephilin, mezuzoth, and talethim, appoint a chasan, and in the course of five years, a congregation is perfectly organized, a synagogue is erected, and a burial-place established." *

The earliest Jewish settlers in America had been of Spanish and Portuguese stock, but by the middle of the eighteenth century some of the leading families were of German origin. By inter-marriage, the earliest German Jews had gradually become merged in the Spanish and Portuguese element. But on the eve of the Civil War, the German Jews had become an important and distinct group in the United States.

Jews left Bavaria after 1836 because of the harsh marriage and economic laws, but they came in greater numbers in the next decade fleeing from Germany to escape poverty and oppression. Quite a few German Jews who came to this country were "forty-eighters"—refugees from the reaction that set in in Germany after the suppression of the Revolution of 1848.

In New York City, where the largest number of German

* Douglass appended the following explanation of some of the terms used by Dr. Lilienthal: "Minyan, the number required; sepher torah, book of law; tephilin, phylacteries; mezuzoth, pieces of parchment, containing portions of Scripture, and fastened to the door post; talethim, four cornered vestments, in which every Jew must be attired at the time of prayer; chasan, reader."

Jews lived, there were three German congregations in existence as early as 1842. But there were many German Jews who moved west and participated in founding or developing Jewish communities in Chicago, Memphis, Cincinnati, St. Paul and Indianapolis. At first they came as peddlers, carrying their packs to distant dwellings, to farmhouses, and to remote villages. They were usually eagerly awaited and warmly received by the farmer and his family, for their coming provided a welcome break in the monotony of life in the backwoods.

The peddler who began business by carrying his pack, graduated to a horse and wagon, and eventually took root in some new community where there seemed to be a favorable opening for a store or trading post. Out of such humble beginnings gradually grew huge mercantile establishments in Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, Cincinnati, St. Paul, and points between.

Not all German Jews became traders and merchants. A number had been mechanics and artisans in Europe and they resumed their occupations shortly after they arrived in America. Soon these Jewish workers assumed an active role in the labor movement of the 1850's. One of the leaders of the great shoemakers' strike of 1860 in New England was Mrs. Esther Greenleaf, a Jewish shoebinder who lived in Lynn, Massachusetts. A reporter for a Boston paper who heard her address a meeting of strikers wrote that her speech had made a profound impression upon everyone in the audience. "She considered their cause," he reported in the *Boston Traveller* of February 28, 1860, "a sacred one and precisely similar to that of the Jewish patriarchs who left Egypt because they were obliged to work for nothing and furnish their own materials."

The Jewish press on the eve of the Civil War (really the press of the Rabbis of the country) consisted of the *Occident*, a weekly, published in Philadelphia, by the Rev. Isaac Lesser; the *Israelite*, also a weekly, published in Cincinnati by the Rev. Dr. Isaac M. Wise; the *Weekly Gleaner*, published at San Francisco by the Rev. Julius Eckman; the *Sinai*, a monthly, published at Baltimore by the Rev. Dr. David Einhorn, and the *Jewish Messenger*, a weekly, published in New York City by the Rev. Dr. Samuel M. Isaacs.

As was to be expected, several efforts were made to unite the scattered Jewish communities in the United States. But this was no simple task. For one thing, the fact that the German Jews kept their native speech both in their homes and in public gatherings tended to separate them from the old Spanish and Portuguese Jews and the more recent arrivals from Poland and Russia. For another, religious differences between the Orthodox and Reform Jewish congregations hampered every effort to achieve Jewish unity.*

But the forces making for unity overcame most of these obstacles. In 1840 the Jewish people in America united in meetings to protest the seizure and torture of thirteen Jews in Damascus on the charge of having put a monk to death. These protest meetings marked the beginning of a movement to organize a permanent national body to speak for the Jews of America. The movement culminated in the formation in 1859 of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites. The organization, modeled after the Board of Deputies of British Jews formed in 1760, was set up at a convention in New York City, November 27, 1859. Delegates from more than twenty-five Jewish congregations, located in various sections of the country, participated in this convention.

The objects of the Board, as set forth in its constitution adopted in November, 1859, were: (1) the collection and arrangement of statistical information respecting the Israelites of America; (2) the promotion of education; (3) the adoption of measures for the redress of grievances which Israelites at home and abroad might suffer for religion's sake; (4) the maintenance of friendly relations with similar Hebrew organizations through-

*Instead of the strict Mosaic laws of the Pentateuch, the reform Jews stressed the spiritual idealism and ethics of the Prophets, and emphasized moral and social consciousness rather than ritualistic observance. Differences between Orthodox and Reform Jews also concerned the practice of dietary regulations; the strict observance of the Sabbath; use of the vernacular in the ritual; abbreviation of services; the inclusion of an organ and choir music in place of the cantor, and the change of the position of the rabbi from a judge of ritual and legalistic disputes to a minister and a preacher. Reform Judaism in America, identified almost exclusively with the German Jews, was under the guidance of Isaac M. Wise, who was both pioneer and prophet in the Reform movement.

out the world; (5) the establishment of a thorough union among all the Israelites throughout the United States.

Not all Jewish congregations joined the Board of Delegates. Several reform congregations, notably the Har Sinai Congregation of Baltimore and Temple Emanu-El of New York, remained aloof because the Board assumed jurisdiction over certain religious questions. Nevertheless, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites did represent an important advance on the path towards Jewish unity in America. As the Board itself pointed out in 1860:

"Henceforth the two hundred thousand American Jews will not stand isolated, and the legitimate influence which so large, so intelligent, and so respectable a body must exercise on the whole Jewish community, will not be lost to the nation."

What was the public attitude towards the Jews in pre-Civil War America? Naturally, there is no single answer to this question. But it can be said that although anti-Semitism was by no means absent in America, the Jews were freely accepted as an integral part of their adopted communities. In 1811, Jacob Mordecai, a Jewish merchant in Philadelphia who had served in the Revolutionary War, opened a female Academy at Warrenton, North Carolina. "The Warrenton Female Academy" remained in operation for many years, and at no time did the community express the slightest hostility to the Jewish director and teacher. Indeed, in the memoirs of Mordecai's son, Alfred Mordecai,* considerable stress is placed on this very point.

"I may say here," he writes, "that the great success attending the establishment of this school, although due in part to the manifest want, in that region, of such an institution, is very remarkable, when it is considered that my father was, by birth,

* Alfred Mordecai attended West Point and graduated in 1823 at the head of his class. After his graduation he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. In recalling his student years at West Point, Mordecai points out in his memoirs: "Perhaps you may expect me to say something on the subject of religious differences among so many associates. I have often thought, with some surprise, of the fact, that, by some sort of silent consent, in our meetings, when we were cadets, that subject was never broached, & the same reticence was observed among our companions as officers." "The Life of Alfred Mordecai, as Related by Himself," edited by James A. Padgett, *North Carolina Historical Review*, vol. XXII, January, 1945, p. 83.

education & conviction, an observer of the Jewish faith, & that his family was the only one of that religion to be found within a large circuit of his house; whilst, with slight exceptions, his pupils were members of Christian families. I believe no serious embarrassment ever ensued, in social or other relations, from this difference of religion in our retired village."

Joseph Jonas, founder of the Jewish community in Cincinnati, makes the same point in his memoirs:

"From the period of the first arrival of the first Israelite in Cincinnati to this date, the Israelites have been much esteemed and highly respected by their fellow citizens. Many persons of Nazarene faith, residing from 50 to 100 miles from the city, hearing that there were Jews living in Cincinnati, came into town for the special purpose of viewing and conversing with some of them, the children of Israel, 'the holy people of God,' as they termed us."

In 1837 the *Boston Journal* featured an article entitled "The Jews," which was reprinted in the June, 1837, issue of the *Jewish Intelligence* as illustrating the attitude towards the Jewish people of a leading newspaper of the day. The article went in part:

"The people of this ancient nation, although scattered abroad on the face of the earth, are still numerous, vastly more so than would at first appear, and still preserve all the characteristics which distinguished this remarkable nation two thousand years ago. The history of the Jews since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, furnishes a striking illustration of the physical difficulty in the way of changing the character of a distinct nation or race. The Jews have had the strongest inducements to abandon the customs and religion of their forefathers, but they have continued Jews. Persecution, in its most hideous form, has been their lot. The monarchs of great empires have made it a point of their religion to shed the blood of the Jews. In some Christian countries it has been regarded as a crime of inconsiderable magnitude to kill a Hebrew. The Jews have been accused of crimes of which they were not guilty, and hundreds and thousands, without distinction of sex or age, have fallen beneath the sword of the executioner, and their worldly possessions divided among their oppressors. Often have they been compelled to purchase temporary tranquillity by surrendering their wealth; contumely has everywhere been heaped upon them; their very name has been a byword and a reproach throughout the civilized world, but they have never even for a moment forgotten or denied their religion, their customs, or NAME. . . ."

6. Jews and the Anti-Slavery Movement

AT A World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840, Adolph Cremieux, delegate from France, told the cheering audience that Jews had to take their place in the midst of any movement which opposed human slavery inasmuch as "all liberties are united, and all persecutions are associated."

"I feel great pleasure in joining this convention," he continued, "because I am a descendant of those Hebrews who were first to proclaim the abolition of slavery; and I this day only repeat what the Jews have always admitted in principle. Indeed, it is not without interest that I now recall to your recollection, that it was the sect of the Essenes which first declared slavery to be a crime, and that it was, to use the expression of Josephus, a perpetual cause of perturbation for the State."

The feelings of this progressive French Jew were shared by many of his kinsmen in America. Yet few Americans, including the Jewish people in this country, are familiar with the fact that the anti-slavery movement enlisted the warm support of the Jews, and that quite a few faced social ostracism, imprisonment, and death itself to further the cause of human freedom. It is not generally known, for example, that among the volunteers who rallied to John Brown's colors when he embarked on his "divine mission" to prevent slavery from being established in Kansas were three Jews: August Bondi, Theodore Weiner, and Jacob Benjamin. During the bitter struggle over "Bleeding Kansas," these men fought from 1855 to 1857 to save the West for free labor and to halt the aggression of the slavocracy.

August Bondi, the most dramatic personality in this Jewish

triumverate, was born in Vienna in 1833. In 1848, at the age of fifteen, he joined the students' revolutionary movement, becoming an active member of the Vienna Academic Legion, whose nine thousand members assisted Louis Kossuth in fomenting the popular upheavals in the German-Austrian States. In September of that year Bondi's parents emigrated to the United States, and his activities in the European struggle for freedom were brought to an abrupt close.

But the youthful revolutionary was stirred by any call to aid the cause of freedom. In 1850 he enlisted in an expedition to liberate Cuba. When this venture proved futile, he returned, after a brief stay in Texas, to St. Louis. A few years later he joined Jacob Benjamin and Theodore Weiner in establishing a trading post in the vicinity of Ossawatimie, Kansas. Here in 1855 the three came face to face with the slavery issue.

Armed Southern bands regularly crossed the Kansas border with the intention of keeping the territory for the slaveowners by intimidating the anti-slavery elements in the population and forcing them to clear out. It was not long before the "Border Ruffians" descended upon the Jewish trio who were already known as free soilers. Their store was burned to the ground, and they were advised to leave Kansas or suffer worse punishment. These warnings were also delivered by those among their neighbors who were accustomed to furnish "places of rendezvous and active aid" to the "Border Ruffians."

But the Jewish free soilers were not so easily intimidated. Instead of leaving Kansas, they enlisted in the military company known as Kansas Regulars which John Brown organized. They pledged themselves "faithfully and punctually [to] perform our duty as a regular volunteer force for the maintenance of the rights and liberties of the Free State Citizens of Kansas." In an unusual autobiographical document, Bondi wrote later of the Commander of the Kansas Regulars:

"We were united as a band of brothers by the love and affection for the man who, with tender words and wise counsel, in the depths of the wilderness of Ottawa Creek, prepared a handful of young men for the work of laying the foundation of a free commonwealth. He constantly preached anti-slavery. He

expressed himself to us that we should never allow ourselves to be tempted from any consideration, to acknowledge laws and institutions to exist as of right, if our conscience and reason condemned them."

Bondi also penned a graphic account of the famous Black Jack encounter with the "Border Ruffians" which took place on June 2, 1856:

"When we followed Captain Brown up the hill towards the 'Border Ruffians' camp, I next to Brown and in advance of Weiner, we walked with bent backs, nearly crawled, that the tall dead grass of the year before might somewhat hide us from the 'Border Ruffians' marksmen, yet the bullets kept on whistling. Weiner was 37 and weighed 250 lbs., I, 22 and lithe. Weiner puffed like a steamboat, hurrying behind me. I called out to him: 'Nu, was meinen Sie jetzt?' (Well, what do you think of it now?) His answer was: 'Was soll ich meichen?' (What should I think of it?) 'Sof o dom mures.' (Hebrew for 'the end of man is death' or in modern phraseology, 'I guess we're up against it.')

"In spite of the whistling of the bullets, I laughed when he said: 'Machen wir den alten Mann songst broges.' (Look out, or we'll make the old man angry.) We started and came up with Captain Brown and we finished the job. . . ."

After his military advances with John Brown were finished, Bondi became active in the Free State Party of Kansas, an organization dedicated to making Kansas a free state. In 1857, he stumped the entire territory for the anti-slavery cause and, until the outbreak of the Civil War, was busily engaged in the movement. During the war he resumed his military activities in behalf of freedom, enlisting in the Union army shortly after Fort Sumter was fired upon.

While the Jewish triumvirate was battling the slave power in Kansas, other Jews were performing deeds of equal stature in behalf of the abolitionist movement. Isidore Bush, who fled to America from Germany, where he had edited the *Organ für Glaubensfreiheit* and other revolutionary papers after the failure of the Revolution of 1848, was a leader in the St. Louis anti-slavery movement during the 1850's. Moritz Pinner rose to a leading position in the Missouri abolitionist movement in 1856. Determined to publish an abolitionist paper in the southern

district of Missouri where he lived, Pinner left for Boston where he outlined his plan to William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, and Wendell Phillips. The idea of starting an anti-slavery paper in the heart of the slavery region of Missouri won the approval of these prominent abolitionists and, late in 1858, Pinner returned to the South to put his plan into operation. On January 1, 1859, the first issue of the paper, published in Kansas City, Missouri, came off the press. Edited by Pinner himself, the *Kansas Post*, as the paper was called, struck out against slavery in each issue. As was to be expected, the slave-owners denounced the paper and threatened to halt its publication by fair means or foul. But Pinner stuck to his duty and the paper appeared regularly in spite of increasing threats.

Even individual acts of Jews in the anti-slavery cause won attention in the contemporary press. In 1853 in Chicago, Michael Greenbaum led a group of citizens who liberated a fugitive Negro slave from Federal authorities. Some years later another Jew, Michael Heilprin, stood up at an anti-slavery meeting at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia, and denounced in vigorous German a crowd of hoodlums who were sent in by Southern sympathizers to disrupt the proceedings. He was immediately attacked by the angry mob and "severely assaulted" before he was rescued. But he had demonstrated that a Jew who had fought for freedom in Europe would not sit by and calmly watch a progressive cause disrupted by the paid agents of the reactionaries.

Actually, Michael Heilprin was only following in the footsteps of another great Jewish fighter for liberty—Ernestine Louise Sismondi Potowski Rose. Born on January 13, 1810, in Poland, the daughter of a distinguished rabbi, she became at an early age a figure of international prominence.*

In *The Liberator* of May 23, 1856, a writer signing himself L. E. B., said of her: "As an advocate of Woman's Rights,

* "How much of freedom they now enjoy, the women of America owe to this noble Polish woman, cannot be estimated, for moral influences are too subtle for measurement," wrote L. C. Barnard years later.

"Those who sat with her on the platform in bygone days well remember her matchless power as a speaker and how safe we all felt while she had the floor, that neither in manner, sentiment or repartee, would she in any way compromise the dignity of the occasion."

Anti-Slavery and Religious Liberty, she has earned a world-wide celebrity. For twenty-four years a public speaker, during which she was associated with the influential classes in Europe and America, and bore an active part in the great progressive movement which marks the present as the most glorious of historical epochs, Ernestine L. Rose has accomplished for the elevation of her sex and amelioration of social conditions a work which can be ascribed to few women of our time."

At the age of sixteen, Ernestine left her home in Poland, leaving her property with her father and instructing him to use it for the benefit of the poor. For several years she travelled through Europe, and wherever she went she interested herself in the cause of the oppressed. In 1832 Ernestine met Robert Owen, the English Utopian Socialist, and enthusiastically joined his movement for the creation of a better social order. So highly was she regarded by the leading social reformers in Europe, that in 1834 she was accorded the honor of presiding at the formation of an organization which united all progressives who sought an improved society. Significantly, its name was "The Association of All Classes of All Nations, Without Distinction of Sect, Sex, Party Condition, Or Color." Thus at the age of 24, Ernestine was an outstanding champion of the natural rights of all human beings, regardless of their religion, nationality, political views, color or sex.

For thirty-three years, from 1836 to 1869, Ernestine was to champion the same principles in the United States. No sooner had she arrived in America then she began to campaign for the abolition of slavery, the rights of labor, and the rights of women. She first aroused attention by her actions at a meeting in the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City, a course of action that Michael Heilprin followed several years later. The meeting had been called to discuss the need for an improved system of free schools. When the Rev. Robert Breckenridge of Kentucky, one of the speakers, instead of devoting himself to the subject, let loose a bitter attack upon those who advocated abolition of slavery and women's rights, Ernestine stood up and called the speaker to order, reminding him that the opponents of free

education were also the enemies of the freedom of the slaves and the rights of women. That a woman should dare to call a minister to account was so unusual that some members of the audience shouted, "Throw her down!" "Drag her out!" But Ernestine was quite accustomed to being met with such cries, and holding her ground she delivered an address in behalf of free education, abolition of slavery, and women's rights, which was so stirring that the audience burst into loud cheers when she finally sat down.

Thereafter she was in great demand as a lecturer for the anti-slavery and women's rights movements. Each year she would travel through the North and West, lecturing in halls and barns, and shocking conservatives who shrieked that it was against the will of God for a woman to speak in public.

In an address before the women's rights convention held in Syracuse, New York, in 1852, Ernestine L. Rose pointed out that the struggle for women's rights was international in scope. "I am an example of the universality of our claims," she declared, "for not American women only, but a daughter of poor, crushed Poland, and the downtrodden and persecuted people called the Jews, 'a child of Israel,' pleads for the equal rights of her sex." Three years later she told the delegates to the New England Anti-Slavery Convention in Boston, "I have been anti-slavery all my life." In the same address she declared:

"How often do we hear the South say that slaves are not the same as white men—that they are not human beings. . . . Even scientific men have come down from the glorious heights of science low enough to be bought by Southern gold, and endeavor to prove that the colored man is a different being from the white man, and therefore it is right to hold him as a slave. . . . I will say of the slave, as I often say when claiming the rights of woman—humanity recognizes no color, mind recognizes no color; pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, life or death, recognizes no color. . . . Like him [the white man] he [the Negro] ought to enjoy or suffer—but he only suffers—with the prosperity or adversity of his country; and therefore, like him, he ought to have all the rights and all the privileges that the country can bestow. Is that any more than any man ought to claim, and ought any man to be satisfied with less?"

Several years before her death on August 4, 1892, she summarized her life-work in one sentence in a letter to her close friend, Susan B. Anthony:

"All that I can tell you is that I used my humble powers to the uttermost, and raised my voice in behalf of human rights in general, and the elevation and rights of woman in particular."

Yet, because she dared to raise her voice in behalf of human rights, and to advocate the freedom of the Negro slaves, Ernestine L. Rose was subjected to a vicious campaign of slander. Reactionaries in this country denounced her as a "foreign propagandist," and charged that she was subsidized by "British gold" to create a social revolution in America. The *Albany Register* on March 7, 1854, wailed that unless the "outpourings of fanaticism and folly of this Polish propagandist" were halted, American institutions would be destroyed.

But Ernestine L. Rose did not flinch before the attacks of the "red baiters" of the 1850's. On the contrary, she flung back into their teeth the charges that had been leveled against her. In a letter to the *Register* she made it clear that no amount of criticism by conservatives and their newspapers would cause her to halt her efforts to extend democratic rights to all Americans and "to use my humble abilities to the uttermost in my power, to aid in the great moral struggle for human rights and freedom."

"Everyone who ever advanced a new idea," she went on, "no matter how great and noble, has been subjected to criticism, and therefore we too must expect it. . . . But it is quite certain that no true soul will ever be deterred from the performance of a duty by any criticism."

Of equal stature was the stand taken by several distinguished Jewish Rabbis in behalf of the freedom of the Negro slaves. In Philadelphia the Rev. Dr. Sabato Morais fought consistently on the side of the abolitionists and preached forcefully against Negro slavery from his pulpit. So vigorous were his utterances that pro-Southern sympathizers in his congregation succeeded for a time in preventing him from preaching. When he was again given the opportunity to preach, he increased the number of abolitionist sermons.

Similarly, in Chicago, the Rev. Dr. Bernard Felsenthal spoke earnestly against slavery before German-Republican clubs, and preached forcefully on the subject from his pulpit, not being swayed in the slightest by protests from some conservative members of the Board of Trustees of his congregation. He also used his pen in the abolitionist cause, writing an article, "*Die Juden und die Sklaverei*" ["The Jews and the Slavery Question"], in the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, in which he attacked slavery as "the most shameful institution on earth," and poured scorn on those "who detest agitation because of its effect on their own material welfare, the disturbance it causes in their own private concerns." Addressing himself to those Jews who defended slavery, Dr. Felsenthal wrote:

"People who have themselves experienced how on the European continent the feudalists and clerics argued that they belonged to an inferior race, that they would, when emancipated, deprive Christians of bread, that they are condemned to eternal slavery through divine ordinance, that they would overrun from everywhere that State which declared them complete citizens, etc., such people are narrow and vulgar enough to advance the same arguments against the emancipation of the Negroes! If anyone, it should be the Jew above all who ought to cultivate the most glowing and most irreconcilable hatred towards 'the peculiar institution of the South' and who ought to make his slogan: *fiat justitio, pereat mundus*. (Justice, even though the world were to be destroyed.)"

The outstanding Jewish minister in the abolitionist movement was the Rev. Dr. David Einhorn. As soon as he arrived from Perth, Austria, in 1855, to serve the Har Sinai Congregation, he threw in his lot with the abolitionists defending the anti-slavery movement through his sermons and the columns of the *Sinai*, which he edited for seven years. "The Spirit of Judaism," he continually emphasized, "... demands the abolition of slavery." He praised the Republican Party for its opposition to the further extension of slavery, and, in answer to those who argued that a victory for the Republicans would be a national calamity since it would lead to the dissolution of the Union, he declared "that if the Union in fact rests on such a thoroughly immoral basis, it would appear neither capable of surviving nor fit to survive."

Despite protests from conservatives in Baltimore, Dr. Einhorn refused to keep silent on the most crucial question of the day. During the Baltimore riot of April 19, 1861, his life was threatened by the pro-slavery faction which had gained the upper hand and began to enforce a reign of terror in the city. Dr. Einhorn was warned that his name was on the list of those prosecuted by the mob, and advised to flee the city. At first he refused, and a volunteer guard had to be stationed in his house to protect him. Finally, he yielded to the entreaties of friends and relatives, and, removing his family from the scene of danger, arrived in Philadelphia.

After several weeks, order was restored in Baltimore. Einhorn made preparations to return to his congregation. But just as he was about to leave for the trip home, he received a letter from his congregation informing him that "it would be most desirable for your own security as well as out of consideration for that of your congregational members if in the future everything that touched upon the stirring questions of the day were avoided from the pulpit."

Einhorn rejected this request for a self-imposed censorship. Not for an instant would he brook any compromise with his conscience, and indignantly he gave up his position. As he wrote later in his *Sinai* magazine, "I could not doubt a moment what course to take." He was truly a man who "could scarcely be expected to trim and harmonize and compromise with conviction and right, no matter what policy may have suggested." Fortunately there were Jews in Philadelphia who wanted just such a man to head their congregation. A few hours after he resigned his post in Baltimore, he was elected by this congregation, the Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia, to officiate in its pulpit. Here he continued his magnificent activities in behalf of the abolitionist cause, and played an important role in rallying community support behind Lincoln's administration during the Civil War.

It is quite obvious, therefore, that the cause of freedom for the Negro masses gained the warm support of Jewish leaders in this country. Unfortunately, there were times when the activities of the Jews in the anti-slavery movement were lost sight of

because of the role a few Jews played in defense of slavery. Not too many people in the North knew of the courageous battles waged against slavery by August Bondi, Moritz Pinner, David Einhorn and other Jews. But they did know that there were Jewish slaveowners and slave traders in the South, and that the largest auction house for the sale of slaves in Richmond, Virginia, was owned and conducted by a Jew. Not many people in the North knew that in 1849 Solomon Heydenfeldt of Alabama had published *A communication on the subject of slave immigration addressed to the Hon. Reuben Chapman, Governor of Alabama*, in which he attacked slavery and the slave trade. Nor did they know the story of how two Jewish brothers who lived in the South, Joseph and Isaac Friedman, befriended Negro slaves and assisted them in gaining their freedom.* But they did know that a Jewish Southern leader, Judah P. Benjamin, of Louisiana, had declared in the United States Senate that the abolitionists were "insane fanatics," and that the Negroes were an "inferior and servile race" who deserved to be held in bondage as "mere property."** They knew, too, that Rabbi Morris J. Raphael of New York had delivered a sermon, entitled *Bible View of Slavery*, shortly after Lincoln's election, in which he justified Negro slavery on the ground that it existed "through the providential allotment of the Divine Being," and was in keeping with God's wishes as set forth in the Bible. The sermon was endorsed by Dr. Isaac M. Wise in the *American Israelite* and Isaac Lesser in the *Occident*. Moreover, it was published by a committee of pro-Southern merchants in New York City and widely circulated.

Small wonder then that, despite the heroic activities of Jews in the anti-slavery movement, there should have been some even in the progressive ranks who felt that the Jews were indifferent

* For an interesting discussion of these Jewish brothers, see Kate E. R. Pickard, *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed* (N. Y., 1856), pp. 229, 232-236.

** Judah P. Benjamin was born of poor parents in 1811 in the British West Indies. His parents, Sephardic Jews, came to North Carolina when Judah was two years old. Nine years later the family moved to Charleston. After a turbulent career in Yale University, Benjamin settled in New Orleans in 1828 without money or friends. His rise to national eminence as a lawyer and businessman was phenomenal, and he soon became financially independent.

to a crime which challenged the conscience of every self-respecting individual. The *New York Tribune*, for example, was frequently guilty of jumping to the unwarranted conclusion that the Jewish slaveowners in the South and some Jewish merchants in New York City, who, because of their economic relations with the Southern planters, were sympathetic to the slave system, were typical of most Jews in this country. Despite its advanced stand in opposition to slavery and in favor of social reform, the *Tribune* seized upon the Rev. Dr. Raphael's sermon defending slavery as one further proof of its contention that very many Jews were among the leading proponents of the Slavocracy. "No people on earth," it declared on January 7, 1861, "have been more oppressed, robbed, trodden down, and persecuted, than the Jews; hence we naturally look to them to furnish apologists and pettifoggers for slavery."

But the *Tribune* was soon forced to admit that it was mistaken. David Einhorn and Michael Heilprin lashed out in print against those Jews who dared to defend slavery. In an article in his *Sinai*, Einhorn attacked Rabbi Raphael's sermon saying that he could not permit Judaism to be so misrepresented. As he pointed out to all who argued that the Bible justified slavery:

"Can *that* Book hallow the enslavement of any race, which sets out with the principles that Adam was created in the image of God, and that all men have descended from *one* human pair? Can *that* Book mean to raise the whip and forge chains, which proclaims, with flaming words, in the name of God: 'break the bonds of oppression, let the oppressed go free, and tear every yoke!' Can *that* Book justify the violent separation of a child from its human mother, which, when speaking of birds' nests, with admirable humanity commands charitable regard for the feelings even of an animal mother?"

Benjamin entered the field of politics as a Whig and served Louisiana as a member of the lower house of the state legislature, as a member of the 1844 Constitutional Convention, and as a State Senator. He was elected United States Senator in 1853, and, after joining the Democratic Party, was re-elected to the Senate in 1859. As a Senator, he gained national prominence for his speeches defending slavery and attacking the anti-slavery movement. During the Civil War he occupied the posts of Attorney-General, Secretary of War and Secretary of State for the Confederacy. He has been frequently referred to by historians as "the brains of the Confederacy."

And again:

"I am not a politician, and have nothing to do with politics. But to proclaim in the name of Judaism, that God has consecrated the institution of slavery! Such a shame and reproach the Jewish religious press is in duty bound to disown and disavow, if both are not to be stigmatized forever. If a Christian clergyman in Europe had delivered a sermon like that of Dr. Raphael, all the Jewish orthodox and reform pens would have immediately been set to work—heaven and earth been summoned for witnesses to prove its fallacies—to repel such a foul charge, and to inveigh against this desecration of God's holy name. Why should we, in America, keep silence when a Jewish preacher plays such pranks? Those Jews only who value the dollar more than God and their religion, can give it their consent and approval."

Considerable interest was aroused by a long letter from Michael Heilprin which appeared in the *New York Tribune* of January 15, 1861. Entitled "Slavery and the Hebrew Scriptures: A Reply to the Rabbi Raphael," the communication demolished most of Raphael's contentions. Thus referring to Raphael's preference for the translation "slave" of the Hebrew word *ebed*, instead of "servant" as used in the English version, he wrote:

"Now, being a Hebrew myself, and pretending to an equal knowledge of the beautiful tongue of my ancestors with the Rev. gentleman, I must tell you, statesmen of these United States, that if you undertake to reconstruct the shattered constitution of your great Republic on the basis of the learned Rabbi's translation of the word, you will find yourselves woefully mistaken."

In the history of the Hebrews as a nation, Heilprin pointed out, there was no mention "of a single slave rising," indicating the absence of a slave system like that in the Southern states where slave insurrections were so frequent.

"The History of this country, alas!" Heilprin concluded, "has scarcely a page on which is not written the black word 'Slavery.' Shall its history be so continued? Answer, statesmen and people of America."

The people of America were soon to answer this question by sweeping slavery out of the country.

7. Jews and the Civil War

THE VAST MAJORITY of the Jews in the North viewed with indignation and alarm the movement initiated by the Southern slaveowners shortly after Lincoln's election to destroy the Union. In their sermons Jewish ministers in New York, Chicago and Cincinnati were quick to point out that the Jews had a special reason to oppose the Southern secessionists, since a dissolution of the Union would adversely affect the status of every single Jew in the entire country.

"Such a change," declared the Rev. Dr. Arnold Fischel, minister of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, "would, as a matter of course, bring more prominently forward the peculiar sentiments of every state, and hitherto, state legislatures have been less liberal than the Federal Government, which gives us good cause to apprehend that should the present constitution be changed and another one adopted by the seceding states, its provisions will not be as liberal as those of the United States. . . . This will be more severely felt by our Southern brethren, who are few in number and who have to contend with social prejudices against their race. It is, therefore, their interest as it is ours, to labor, to hope, and to pray for the preservation of the Union."

The Jewish press echoed Rev. Fischel's sentiments. *Sinai* called upon the Jews to mobilize and do everything in their power to prevent the "Home of the Oppressed" from being "overrun with anarchy or cursed with disruption." And the *Jewish Messenger* abandoned its non-political attitude to announce on December 28, 1860, that the Jews had to be foremost in opposing the secessionists:

"The union . . . has been the source of happiness for our ancestors and ourselves. Under the protection of the freedom guaranteed us by the Constitution, we have lived in the enjoyment of full and perfect equality with our fellow-citizens. We are enabled to worship the Supreme Being according to the dictates of conscience, we can maintain the position to which our abilities entitle us, without our religious opinions being an impediment to advancement. This Republic was the first to recognize our claims to absolute equality, with men of whatever religious denomination. Here we can sit 'each under his vine and fig-tree, with none to make him afraid.'"

But when prayers did not halt the secessionist drive and it became obvious after the firing on Fort Sumter that the Union could only be preserved by the armed might of the people, Jewish leaders and the Jewish press promptly called upon the Jews to emulate the deeds of their ancestors during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. On April 26, 1861, the *Jewish Messenger* cried out:

"STAND BY THE FLAG!"

" . . . The time is past for forbearance and temporizing. We are now to act, and sure we are, that those whom these words may reach, will not be backward in realizing the duty that is incumbent upon them—to rally as one man for the Union and the Constitution. The Union—which binds together, by so many sacred ties, millions of freemen—which extends its hearty invitation to the oppressed of all nations, to come and be sheltered beneath its protecting wings—shall it be severed, destroyed, or even impaired? Shall those, whom we once called our brethren, be permitted to overthrow the fabric reared by the noble patriots of the revolution, and cemented with their blood?

"And the Constitution—guaranteeing to all, the free exercise of their religious opinions—extending to all, liberty, justice, and equality—the pride of Americans, the admiration of the world—shall that Constitution be subverted, and anarchy usurp the place of a sound, safe and stable government, deriving its authority from the consent of the American people?

"The voice of millions yet unborn, cries out, 'Forbid it, Heaven!' The voice of the American people declares in tones not to be misunderstood: 'It shall not be!'

"Then stand by the Flag! What death can be as glorious as that of the patriot, surrendering his life in defense of his country—pouring forth his blood on the battlefield—to live forever in

the hearts of a grateful people? Whether native or Israelite, stand by it, and you are doing your duty, and acting well your part on the side of liberty and justice!"

This editorial was widely reprinted in the press and evoked considerable applause from patriotic papers. "This tone of manly, independent patriotism," observed *The Independent*, a weekly published in New York, "might well be imitated by certain professedly Christian Editors, who, though born and educated under the flag of the United States, study just now to maintain 'a neutral ground,' and by continually discoursing the evil of war, passively sympathize with those who would overthrow the union."

Throughout the war, the *Jewish Messenger* stood boldly as a champion of the Union cause. Articles, editorials and special features were devoted to the winning of the war. Even poems published in the paper stressed the same theme. The following, published in the *Jewish Messenger* of October 4, 1861, was written by one of its subscribers:

OUR UNION

They shall not split our glorious land,
The homestead of the free!
They shall not tear our noble flag—
The flag of liberty.
Until within our glowing breasts
The spark of freedom dies
And under smoking ruins, slain,
The last of freemen lies.

Then fear not for our glorious land
The cradle of the free;
Then fear not for our noble flag
The emblem of Liberty.
Until within our glowing breasts
The Spark of freedom dies,
And under smoking ruins, slain,
The host of freemen lies.

So staunchly did the Rev. Dr. Isaacs, publisher of the *Jewish Messenger*, defend the Union cause that he lost nearly all his Southern subscribers. He continued to speak out in support of the war effort, nevertheless, saying in one of his editorials:

"We want subscribers, for without them we cannot publish a paper, and Judaism needs an organ; but we want much more truth and loyalty, and for them we are ready, if we must, to sacrifice all other considerations."

Equally forthright in his devotion to the Union cause was Rabbi David Einhorn. What is more, Einhorn saw from the very beginning of the Civil War that the freedom of the slaves was essential for the victory of the North. On July 4, 1861, he called upon every Jew in the North to join the ranks of Union and Abolition. "Just as David, the weak, slew Goliath, the powerful," he cried, "so will the forces of Union and Abolition slay the forces of Disunion and Slavery. And who has more at stake concerning the question whether freedom or slavery ought to become the basis of our state life than our brethren, who today in most of the lands of the old world still languish under slavery?"

Lincoln's call for troops met with prompt response from the Jews. There were no more than two hundred thousand Jews in all of America at the time of the Civil War. Yet, according to Simon Wolf in *The American Jew as Patriot Soldier, and Citizen*, over six thousand of them fought in the Union Army. In New York alone, more than two thousand Jews entered the Federal Army and more than one thousand Jews volunteered from Illinois.

Even conservative estimates place the Jewish officers in the Union Army at nine Generals, eighteen Colonels, eight Lieutenant-Colonels, forty Majors, two hundred and five Captains, three hundred and twenty-five Lieutenants, forty-eight Adjutants and twenty-five Surgeons. The majority of these officers were promoted from the ranks for distinguished service.

Frederick Knefler enlisted as a private in the Indiana Volunteer Infantry and won promotion after promotion on the field of battle. He finally rose to be colonel of his regiment, and was subsequently appointed brigadier general and then brevet major general for "meritorious conduct at Chickamauga."

Philip J. Joachimson, who, while serving in the District Attorney's office before the war had secured the first conviction of a slave trader, helped to organize the 56th New York Volunteer Regiment and departed for the front to act as its lieutenant-

colonel. He was later appointed Brevet Brigadier General and was wounded while serving with his Regiment in New Orleans.

Leopold Blumberg, who was forced to flee from Baltimore to escape lynching for his abolitionist sentiments, helped organize the 5th Regiment of Maryland Infantry at the outbreak of the war. He served at first as major of the regiment and fought in many battles until he was severely wounded at the Battle of Antietam. Although unable to continue in active service, he remained with his regiment and was brevetted brigadier general.

After the failure of the Revolution of 1848 in Germany, Edward S. Salomon came to the United States, settling eventually in Chicago. Anti-slavery to the core, he became active in the Republican Party soon after it was formed. In 1860 he was a Republican candidate for the Chicago City Council, and became its youngest member, being only twenty-four at the time he was elected.

Salomon responded eagerly to Lincoln's first call for troops, joining the 24th Illinois Infantry, popularly known as the Hecker-Jacger Regiment.* Commissioned as a second lieutenant, he speedily rose to first lieutenant, captain and major. Later he was commissioned lieutenant-colonel of the 82nd Illinois Infantry, a regiment consisting of Hungarians, Poles, Germans, and Jews who lived in Chicago.

Salomon first distinguished himself in the Battle of Gettysburg, and was praised by General Carl Schurz in his official report to General Howard for having "displayed the highest order of coolness and determination under very trying circumstances." But this was by no means the only time Colonel Salomon was to win commendation from his superior officers. In his official report to the War Department on the successful campaign to capture Savannah, Colonel Robinson wrote:

* Salomon's younger brother, Herman, also enlisted in Company I, First Regiment Missouri Engineers, for three years, then re-enlisted and served until the end of the war. At the close of his three years' enlistment he wrote his aged parents: "Forgive me for not returning home, as you request; but it is my sacred duty to fight for the Union as long as it is in danger." "Civil War Diary of Herman Salomon," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, vol. X, December, 1926, p. 205.

"The immediate command of my brigade during this expedition was intrusted to Lieutenant-Colonel E. S. Salomon of the eighty-second Illinois volunteers who was the senior officer present. I take pleasure in acknowledging the efficiency and zeal with which Lieutenant-Colonel Salomon discharged the duty thus devolving upon him."

In June, 1865, Salomon was recommended to the Secretary of War for promotion to the rank of brigadier general. In his letter to Secretary Stanton, Brigadier General Robinson outlined the nature of Salomon's military contributions during the war:

"I consider Colonel Salomon one of the most deserving officers of my acquaintance. His regiment is his highest praise. In point of drill and discipline it is the second in this corps. It will bear safe comparison with any other of the same age in the army."

On June 15, 1865, Secretary Stanton informed Salomon that the President of the United States had appointed him "for distinguished gallantry and meritorious service during the war a Brigadier General of Volunteers by Brevet, in the service of the United States. . . ."

Seven Jews are known to have won the Congressional Medal of Honor for displaying unusual courage while under fire: Benjamin B. Levy, Abraham Cohn, Leonard Karpeles, Isaac Gause, Abraham Greenwalt, Henry Heller, and David Orbansky.

Benjamin B. Levy enlisted in the First New York Volunteers as a drummer, and speedily received commendation after commendation for his sagacity and coolness under fire. Letters from officers under whom he served recommending him for the Medal of Honor from Congress praised him highly for his distinguished services. Colonel Garret Dyckman of the 1st New York Volunteers wrote:

"The said Benj. Levy while on board the steamer 'Express' at the time she was about being captured by the Confederate gunboat 'Seabird,' from Norfolk, by his presence of mind saved the steamer, and under my own eyes at the fight at Charles City Crossroads, he being a drummer at the time and the color sergeants and corporals having been shot down, Levy carried two of the colors of the regiment throughout the fight."

The full story of the achievements of every Jewish soldier who fought in the Union Army would make a book by itself. The following testimony of Major General Oliver O. Howard, under whom many Jewish soldiers served, reveals the general nature of these accomplishments:

"So many of the German officers and men," wrote General Howard, "were of Jewish lineage that I am unable to designate them. I had a Jewish aide-de-camp, one of the bravest and best, in the first battle of Bull Run; he is now a distinguished officer of the army, a man of scientific attainment. I had another aide who was killed at the Battle of Chancellorsville, a true and brave officer. Two of my brigade commanders answered to the above description. Intrinsically, there are no more patriotic men to be found in the country than those who claim to be of Hebrew descent and who served with me in parallel commands or more directly under my instructions."

Occasionally some Jewish spokesmen suggested that separate Jewish regiments be set up in the Union Army. But the Jewish soldiers rejected these suggestions, saying: "We are quite satisfied to fight with our Christian comrades for one cause, one country, and THE UNION."

Jewish and Christian soldiers fought side by side throughout the long and bloody conflict, separating only to observe their own religious holidays. In a letter to the *Jewish Messenger* of February 7, 1862, a Jewish soldier told a thrilling story of how his co-religionists in the Union Army fought and prayed:

"It is quite common for Jewish soldiers belonging to the same company to meet together for worship on Sabbath, in some secluded spot, and I know a young soldier, who was ordered on Yom Kippur morning to take part in a skirmish, near Harper's Ferry, which he had to go through, without having tasted food, and as soon as the enemy retreated, he retired to the woods, where he remained until sunset reading his prayers. The character of these devotions is not the least interesting from the fact that they are always performed in solemn silence, and in some secluded spot, where the noise of the camp cannot penetrate. When looking on these groups, I cannot help reflecting on the remarkable history of our race. Here are the descendants of the Hebrew patriarch who smote the confederated kings near Damascus, the

descendants of those who overthrew the colossal hosts of proud Egypt, and conquered the powerful nations of Philistea, who, under the Maccabees, triumphed over the Syrian despot, the survivors of all ancient dynasties, the participants in every remarkable event of history, behold them now in the New World, shedding their blood for the maintenance of liberties secured to them by this Republic. Whilst thus reflecting, I feel most solemnly impressed by hearing in these Virginian forests my brethren utter the *Shymauz Israel*, which first our great lawgiver proclaimed in the plains of Arabia."

Despite their contributions to the Union cause, the Jewish people were sometimes subjected to bigoted attacks in the press. Several Northern newspapers, for example, pointed to the presence of Jewish soldiers in the Confederate Army* and to the Jewish Secretary of State for the Confederacy, Judah P. Benjamin, and concluded that these facts proved that the Jews were unpatriotic. But the Jewish people did not ignore these newspaper attacks. When the *New York Times* emphasized that David Yulee of Florida, a leader of the Confederacy, was a Jew, the *Jewish Messenger* shot back on March 21, 1862:

"So are more than twenty field officers, a hundred line officers, and at least six thousand privates fighting under the glorious flag of our Union, *Jews*. In insulting the Jewish name, by holding it up to ridicule in the person of one who happens to be an Israelite, the *Times* is virtually slandering a large number of patriots, who have left their homes for the purpose of upholding the Constitution and the Union—the *Times* is labelling all American Jewish citizens who have freely tendered their purses, aye, their lives if need be, for the common defence. It is unworthy of a journal claiming to be the representative organ of any part of the American people."

While Jewish sons were shedding their blood in the struggle to preserve the Union and end slavery, their mothers, wives and sisters were contributing to the same cause by service on the home front. One week after the outbreak of the war, the *Jewish Messenger* reported that the Ladies of the Congregation, Shearith

*Not all Jews in the South, however, supported the Confederate cause. Some Jewish inhabitants of New Orleans left the city to join the Union army immediately after the Civil War started. Furthermore, Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans openly delivered pro-Union sermons in the city.

Israel, were preparing to meet "for the purpose of adopting suitable measures to assist the families of their fellow-citizens, who have volunteered in defense of their country, its constitution and laws." Soon regular reports appeared in the press relating in detail the activities of the Jewish women of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, and other cities, in manufacturing bandages for sick and wounded soldiers, and in preparing other articles needed by the fighting men. In June, 1862, the Ladies Hebrew Association for the Relief of Sick and Wounded Union Soldiers was formed in Philadelphia, and shortly thereafter similar organizations made their appearance in other cities. The object of these societies, as set forth in their constitutions, was to provide "for the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers, irrespective of religious creed, and to obviate the sufferings of the brave soldiers, by providing them with delicacies and clothing while they lie in the army hospitals."

Nor did Jewish women confine their win-the-war activities to the care of the wounded soldiers. Several, notably Ernestine L. Rose, joined with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Angelina Grimke Weld and other anti-slavery crusaders in organizing the Women's National Loyal League. This society had a twofold purpose: (1) the organization of a mass demand for the freedom of the slaves and the arming of the Negro people; (2) the defeat of the Copperheads, the "fifth columnists" of the Civil War years. Jewish women were active in the campaign initiated by the League to collect signatures to petitions calling upon President Lincoln to issue an Emancipation Proclamation.

At one of the conventions of the Women's National Loyal League a leading speaker was a Jewish woman, Mrs. Chalkstone of California, who was honored for her services to the Union cause. In replying to the tributes bestowed upon her, Mrs. Chalkstone said in words that have a surprisingly modern ring:

"My speech shall be as brief as possible, and I ask for an excuse for my broken speech. . . . I am from Germany, where my brothers all fought against the Government and tried to make us free, but were unsuccessful. My only son, seventeen years old, is in our great and noble Army of the Union. He has fought in many battles here, and I only came from California to see him

once more. I have not seen him yet . . . but I am willing to lay down all this sacrifice for the cause of liberty. We foreigners know the preciousness of that great, noble gift a great deal better than you, because you never were in slavery, but we are born in it. Germany pines for freedom. In Germany we sacrificed our wealth and ornaments for it, and the women in this country ought to do the same. . . ."

Referring to criticisms of Lincoln for having waited two years before he emancipated the slaves, this Jewish woman reminded the audience that "it took eighteen hundred years in Europe to emancipate the Jews, and they are not emancipated now." Instead of criticizing Lincoln, she declared, all progressives should join in praising him for his determination to stand by the Emancipation Proclamation as well as for other liberal acts that featured his administration.

The Jewish people had good cause to praise Abraham Lincoln. On several occasions the Great Emancipator fought for equality for the Jews of America. When General Leopold Blumenberg was suddenly dismissed from his post by political opponents who could not rise above their prejudices, Lincoln intervened and ordered a hearing for him. "He has suffered for us and served us well, had the rope around his neck for being our friend, raised troops, fought and been wounded," wrote the President. "He should not be dismissed in a way that disgraces and ruins him without a hearing."

Other incidents revealed Lincoln's opposition to policies which inflicted injustices upon the Jewish people. In October, 1861, Rev. Dr. Arnold Fischel applied to Secretary of War Cameron for a commission as Chaplain in the "Cameron Dragoons," a volunteer regiment composed largely of Jewish soldiers. Cameron denied the application on the ground that the Acts of Congress relating to Chaplains required them to be "of a Christian denomination." Immediately the Board of American Israelites sent a memorial to Congress pointing out how unjust it was that though many Jews were "fighting the battles of our country," the authorities were prevented from appointing even one chaplain who might be able "to afford religious consolation to such Israelites as may be dangerously

wounded or found in a dying condition on the field of battle, or lying in the hospitals." The Board also sent Rev. Fischel to Washington to urge Lincoln to request Congress to strike out the words "Christian ordained clergymen or their equivalent" from the laws relating to Army Chaplains. Rev. Fischel's description of his interview with the President throws much light on Lincoln's attitude towards the entire question of the place of the Jewish people in the struggle to preserve the Union:

"I called this morning at ten o'clock at the White House, where hundreds of people were anxiously waiting for admission, some of whom told me that they had been for three days awaiting their turn. I was, nevertheless, at once invited to his room and was received with marked courtesy. After having read the letter of the Board and delivered to him several letters of introduction, he questioned me on various matters connected with this subject and then told me that he fully admitted the justice of my remarks, that he believed the exclusion of Jewish Chaplains to have been altogether unintentional on the part of Congress, and agreed that something ought to be done to meet this case. . . . I thanked him for his kind reception, and expressed to him my best wishes for his welfare. In the course of my remarks I gave him clearly to understand that I came to him not as an office-seeker but to contend for the principle of religious liberty, for the Constitutional rights of the Jewish community, and for the welfare of the Jewish Volunteers, which he seemed fully to appreciate."

On December 14, 1861, the President wrote to Dr. Fischel:
Executive Mansion
Dec. 14, 1861

REV. DR. FISCHEL
My Dear Sir:

I find there are several particulars in which the present law in regard to Chaplains is supposed to be deficient, all of which I now design presenting to the appropriate Committee of Congress. I shall try to have a new law broad enough to cover what is desired by you in behalf of the Israelites.

Yours truly,
A. LINCOLN

Meanwhile thousands of Christians besieged Congress with memorials urging that the law be amended. On March 12, 1862, the Act was amended so as to authorize the employment of Brigade Chaplains, "one or more of which shall be of the

Catholic, Protestant or Jewish religion." Subsequently Lincoln appointed several Jewish rabbis as Army Chaplains.

On December 17, 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant, disturbed by Jewish peddlers, issued an order expelling all Jews within twenty-four hours from the area under his command. A great protest arose among the Jews against this bigoted, unconstitutional, and inhuman order. Indignant Jews all over the North and West sent letters to President Lincoln requesting his "immediate interposition" to end "this enormous outrage on all law and humanity."

On January 3, 1863, C. J. Kaskel, a Jewish merchant of Paducah, accompanied by Representative Gurley of Ohio, visited the President. "And so the Children of Israel were driven from the happy land of Canaan?" Lincoln asked. "Yes," replied Kaskel, "and that is why we have come unto Father Abraham's bosom, asking protection." Lincoln replied: "And this protection they shall have." He gave Kaskel a letter to General Halleck ordering that Grant's order be immediately revoked. Lincoln's letter was promptly obeyed.*

Before the success of Kaskel's appeal was known, another delegation of five, composed of rabbis, businessmen and lawyers, arrived in Washington. They decided to visit the President and thank him for his prompt action. Rabbi Isaac M. Wise sent an interesting account of the interview to the *American Israelite*.

* One result of the struggle against General Grant's bigoted order was the recognition of the need for greater unity among the Jewish people in America. "We must show ourselves strong," editorialized the *Jewish Messenger* on January 16, 1863, "determined on the vindication of our rights. How can we do this, except by a union among ourselves? If every quartermaster's clerk, who considers himself aggrieved, will get up an indignation meeting and adopt violent resolutions purporting to represent the Israelites of America—as has been done within a year—if every minister of our faith, every trustee of a congregation, every person bearing a Jewish name, will arrogate to himself the right of speaking for the American Israelites, of overwhelming the President and Congress and the press with reams of foolscap, detailing the individual sentiments of a thousand or more independent, petty communities on this or that question, can we wonder that the officers of Government pay no attention to this mass of papers and signatures? . . . The necessity of a strong central organization for American Israelites was never more apparent than at this juncture. . . ."

"We went to the White House in our traveling habiliments and spoke about half an hour to the President of the United States in an open and frank manner and were dismissed in the same simple style. Having expressed our thanks for his promptness and despatch in revoking Grant's order the President gave utterance to his surprise that such an order should have been issued. 'I don't like to see a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners,' he said. The President fully convinced us that he knows no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and that he feels no prejudice against any nationality and especially against the Israelites. We had little chance to say anything, the President being so splendidly eloquent on this occasion. He spoke like a simple, plain citizen and tried in various forms to convince us of the sincerity of his words on this matter."

One has but to reread Rabbi Wise's report of his interview with Lincoln to understand why the President was so deeply loved by the Jewish soldiers and citizens. In October, 1864, a delegation of Jews of New York visited Lincoln to assure him that the Jewish people would vote overwhelmingly to re-elect him President. They spoke too, they added, for thousands of Jewish soldiers in the Union Army who would vote, as they fought, for Union and Victory.

In April, 1865, the Confederacy surrendered and the Civil War was over. But shortly after the news of the Victory for the Union and freedom was reported, the nation was plunged into grief by the assassination of President Lincoln. The Jewish people, like their Christian brothers, were overwhelmed by the sad tidings. As the Hebrew Congregation Ohave Shalom of Boston put it in a resolution adopted on April 16, 1865: ". . . No words can convey the deep sorrow which we feel within us that the first officer of the country should thus be cut off from among us at the moment when his wisdom and prudence were about to lead us out of the chaos of war to the paradise of peace." All over the country sermons were delivered by Jewish Rabbis in honor of the martyred President. Perhaps Rabbi Max Lilienthal of the Broadway Synagogue in Cincinnati, Ohio, came closest to expressing Lincoln's meaning to the American people in his sermon of April 22, 1865, entitled "The Assassination of Lincoln."

"Who was Abraham Lincoln?" he asked. "The first laborer-

President. Of his antecedents nothing could be said, but that he had risen by his own energies from the lowest sphere of life. He had battled with all kinds of personal difficulties, and had overcome them; he had struggled against all obstacles, and had conquered them; and by his sagacity, energy and unsophisticated honesty, had succeeded to be elected to fill the greatest office in the hands of the people. And thus his election proved, for the first time, the full meaning of American liberty and equality.

"The people, the laboring classes all over the world, were now emancipated indeed; their rights were not a mere dead letter, they were now sealed and signed by the majestic hand of history, they were in Abraham Lincoln, raised to the full acquisition of the infinite rights of man. . . ."

The Civil War was over but the battle for the full freedom of the Negro people in America was just beginning. It was to be expected that the Jewish people would participate in this struggle. For as Rabbi Bernard Felsenthal pointed out, any discrimination against the Negro people affected the status of Jews in America, since it was impossible to deny one minority its full rights without injuring the rights of all minorities. Even as early as July, 1862, Dr. Felsenthal had stressed this theme in an article in the *Illinois Staatszeitung*, entitled, "*Legislatorische Barberei. Negerrecht und Juden recht*" [Legislative Barbarism. Rights of the Negro people and rights of the Jewish people]. The article was directed against a bill passed in the Senate declaring Negroes incompetent to act as witnesses in the District of Columbia. Felsenthal traced the history of similar restrictions imposed upon Jews from Justinian, the Roman Emperor to 1862, and showed that the exact same arguments used to justify this discrimination in the case of Jews were now being used against Negroes. "What can justify such barbarism?" he cried. "Russia does not lie only between Kalisz and Kamchatka, but is also on the shores of the Potomac and Lake Michigan."

Events were soon to justify Felsenthal's argument that freedom for one minority would bring increased freedom for others. In 1866 a new state constitution was submitted to the people of North Carolina for ratification. One of the provisions of the

proposed constitution declared that no person who denied "the divine authority of both the Old and New Testaments . . . shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in any civil department of the State." Immediately, the Board of Delegates of the American Israelites appealed to the citizens of North Carolina, calling upon all friends of religious liberty to reject this proposition. The appeal said:

"It is opposed to the fundamental principle of our national governments, it is obnoxious to those who still regard with reverence the memory of an ancestry driven by religious persecution from their homes in the Old World to seek and find an asylum in America. Shall it illustrate that the citizens of North Carolina are recreant to their pledge, solemnly enumerated in the immortal Declaration of Independence, that liberty is an inalienable right of man?"

This appeal aroused considerable support in progressive circles in North Carolina. Nevertheless, the constitution was rejected.

It was not until 1868 that Jewish emancipation in North Carolina was accomplished. In that year Negroes and poor whites were allowed to vote for delegates to the State Constitutional Convention. The Convention, composed of many delegates—Negro and white—representing the masses of common people in North Carolina eliminated from the constitution of the state the clause which, in the past, had practically disqualified Jews from holding office. In other Southern states, moreover, conventions made up of representatives of the common people—Negro and white—guaranteed full religious freedom and rights to the Jewish people. Surveying this situation, the Board of American Israelites reported joyfully in 1868: "The Constitutions of the Southern States, adopted during the year, make no discrimination against Israelites."

On this note we can bring to a close the story of the part played by the Jewish people in several outstanding social and political movements to advance democracy in America. As in 1776, 1812, and 1861, so today the Jewish people are fighting in

alliance with men and women of all religions, nationalities, and races for freedom and democracy, for the right of the common man to enjoy a better and happier life. In their present conflict against Fascist barbarism they seek to preserve and broaden the principles which served to guide those Jewish patriots who stood by Washington, who fought under Andrew Jackson, and who battled in the armies of Abraham Lincoln.

APPENDICES

MEMORIAL OF THE JEWS OF PHILADELPHIA TO THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATURE, DECEMBER 23, 1783

To the honourable the COUNCIL OF CENSORS, assembled agreeable to the constitution of the State of Pennsylvania. The Memorial of Rabbi Ger. Seixas of the Synagogue of the Jews at Philadelphia, Simon Nathan their Parnass or President, Asher Myers, Bernard Gratz and Haym Salomon the Mahamad, or Associates of their Council in behalf of themselves and their brethren Jews, residing in Pennsylvania,

Most respectfully sheweth,

That by the tenth section of the Frame of Government of this Commonwealth, it is ordered that each member of the general assembly of the representatives of the freemen of Pennsylvania, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe a declaration, which ends in these words, "I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the old and new Testament to be given by divine inspiration," to which is added an assurance that "no further" or other religious test shall ever be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this state.

Your memorialists beg leave to observe, that this clause seems to limit the civil rights of your citizens to one very special article of creed: Whereas by the second paragraph of the declaration of the rights of the inhabitants, it is asserted without any other limitation than the professing the existence of God, in plain words, "that no man who acknowledges the being of a God can be justly deprived or abridged of any civil rights as a citizen on account of his religious sentiments." But certainly this religious test deprives the Jews of the most eminent rights of freemen, solemnly ascertained to all men who are not professed Atheists.

May it please your Honors,

Although the Jews in Pennsylvania are but few in number, yet liberty of the people in one country, and the declaration of the government thereof, that these liberties are the rights of the people, may prove a powerful attraction to men, who live under restraints in another country. Holland and England have made valuable acquisitions of men, who for their religious sentiments, were disturbed in their own countries—And if Jews in Europe or elsewhere, should incline to transport themselves to America, and would, for reason of some certain advantage of the soil, climate, or the trade of Pennsylvania, rather become inhabitants thereof, than of any other State; yet the disability of Jews to take seat among the representatives of the people, as worded by the said religious test, might determine their free choice to go to New York, or to any other of the United States of America, where there is no such restraint laid upon the nation and religion of the Jews, as in Pennsylvania.

Your memorialists cannot say that the Jews are particularly fond of being representatives of the people in assembly or civil officers and magistrates in the State; but with great submission they apprehend that a clause in the constitution, which disables them to be elected by their fellow citizens, is a stigma upon their nation and their religion, and it is inconsistent with the second paragraph of the said bill of rights; otherwise Jews are as fond of liberty as their religious societies can be, and it must create in them a displeasure, when they perceive that for their professed dissent in doctrine, which is inconsistent with their religious sentiments, they should be excluded from the most important and honorable part of the rights of a free citizen.

Your memorialists beg further leave to represent, that in the religious books of the Jews, which are or may be in every man's hands, there are no such doctrines or principles established as are inconsistent with the safety and happiness of the people of Pennsylvania; and that the conduct and behaviour of the Jews in this and the neighboring States, has always tallied with the great design of the Revolution; that the Jews of Charlestown, New York, New-Port and other posts, occupied by the British troops, have distinguishedly suffered for their attachment to the Revolution principles; and their brethren at St. Eustatius, for the same cause, experienced the most severe resentments of the British commanders. The Jews of Pennsylvania in proportion to the number of their members, can count with any religious

society whatsoever, the Whigs among either of them, they have served some of them in the Continental militia, and of the government of this State; they have no inconsiderable property in lands and tenements, but particularly in the way of trade, some more, some less, for which they pay taxes; they have, upon every plan formed for public utility been forward to contribute as much as their circumstances would admit of; and as a nation or a religious society, they stand unimpeached of any matter whatsoever, against the safety and happiness of the people.

And your memorialists humbly pray, that if your honours, from any other consideration than the subject of this address, should think proper to call a convention for revising the constitution, you would be pleased to recommend this to the notice of that convention.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GEORGE WASHINGTON AND JEWISH CONGREGATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1790

*Address of the Newport Congregation to the President of the
United States of America*

Sir: Permit the children of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merit, and to join with our fellow-citizens in welcoming you to Newport.

With pleasure we reflect on those days of difficulty and danger when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword, shielded your head in the days of battle; and we rejoice to think that the same spirit which rested on the bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel, enabling him to preside over the provinces of the Babylonian Empire, rests and ever will rest upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of the Chief Magistrate of these States.

Deprived as we hitherto have been of the invaluable rights of free citizens, we now, with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of all events, behold a government erected by the majesty of the people, a government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance, but generously affording

to all liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship, deeming every one of whatever nation, tongue and language equal parts of the great governmental machine.

This so ample and extensive Federal Union, whose base is philanthropy, mutual confidence and public virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the great God who rules in the armies of the heavens and among the inhabitants of the earth, doing whatever seemeth to Him good.

For all the blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of Days, the great Preserver of men, beseeching Him that the angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised land may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life, and when, like Joshua, full of days and full of honors, you are gathered to your fathers, may you be admitted into the heavenly paradise to partake of the water of life and the tree of immortality.

Done and signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island.

MOSES SEIXAS, Warden

Newport, August 17, 1790

The Address of the Hebrew Congregations in the Cities of Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, and Charleston, to the President of the United States

Sir: It is reserved for you to unite in affection for your character and person every political and religious denomination of men, and in this will the Hebrew Congregations aforesaid yield to no class of their fellow-citizens. We have hitherto been prevented by various circumstances peculiar to our situation from adding our congratulations to those which the rest of America have offered on your elevation to the chair of the Federal Government. Deign, then, illustrious sir, to accept This, our homage.

The wonders which the Lord of Hosts hath worked in the days of our forefathers have taught us to observe the greatness of His wisdom and His might throughout the events of the late glorious Revolution; and, while we humble ourselves at His footstool in thanksgiving and praise for the blessing of His deliverance, we acknowledge you, the leader of American armies, as His chosen and beloved servant. But not to your sword alone

is present happiness to be ascribed; that, indeed, opened the way to the reign of freedom, but never was it perfectly secure until your hand gave birth to the Federal Constitution and you renounced the joys of retirement to seal by your administration in peace what you had achieved in war.

To the Eternal God, who is thy refuge, we commit in our prayers the care of thy precious life; and when, full of years thou shalt be gathered unto thy people, "thy righteousness shall go before thee," and we shall remember, amidst our regret, "that the Lord hath set apart the godly for Himself," whilst thy name and thy virtues will remain an indelible memorial on our minds.

MANUEL JOSEPHSON

For and in behalf and under the authority of the several congregations aforesaid.

Philadelphia, December 13, 1790

Washington's Reply to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, R.I.

Gentlemen: While I receive with much satisfaction your address replete with expressions of esteem, I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you that I shall always retain grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced on my visit to Newport, from all classes of citizens. The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger, which are past, is rendered the more sweet from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security.

If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good government, to become a great and happy people. The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All profess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my

Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the Children of the Stock of Abraham who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig-tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. WASHINGTON

LETTER OF BENJAMIN NONES TO THE GAZETTE OF
THE UNITED STATES, AUGUST 11, 1800

TO THE PRINTER OF THE *Gazette of the United States*

Sir: I HOPE, if you take the liberty of inserting calumnies against individuals, for the amusement of your readers, you will have so much regard to justice, as to permit the injured through the same channel that conveyed the slander, to appeal to the public in self defence. I expect of you, therefore, to insert this reply to your ironical reporter of the proceedings at the meeting of the republican citizens of Philadelphia, contained in your gazette of the fifth instant; so far as I am concerned in that statement. I am no enemy Mr. Wayne to wit; nor do I think the political parties have much right to complain, if they enable the public to laugh at each other's expense, provided it be managed with the same degree of ingenuity, and some attention to truth and candor. But your reporter of the proceedings at that meeting is as destitute of truth and candor, as he is of ingenuity, and I think, I can shew, that the want of prudence of this Mr. Karplot, in his slander upon me, is equally glaring with his want of wit, his want of veracity, his want of decency, and his want of humanity.

I am accused of being a *JEW*, of being a *REPUBLICAN*, and of being *POOR*.

I am a *JEW*. I glory in belonging to that persuasion, which even its opponents, whether Christian, or Mohamedan, allow to be of divine origin—of that persuasion on which Christianity itself was originally founded, and must ultimately rest—which has preserved its faith secure and undefiled, for near three thou-

sand years, whose votaries have never murdered each other in religious war, or cherished the theological hatred so general, so unextinguishable among those who revile them. A persuasion, whose patient followers have endured for ages the pious cruelties of Pagans, and of Christians, and preserved in the unoffending practice of their rites and ceremonies, amidst privations; amidst pains, penalties, confiscations, banishments, tortures and deaths, beyond the example of any other sect, which the page of history has hitherto recorded.

To be of such a persuasion, is to me no disgrace; though I well understand the inhuman language of bigoted contempt, in which your reporter by attempting to make me ridiculous, as a Jew, has made himself detestable, whatever religious persuasion may be dishonored by his adherence.

But I am a Jew. I am so; and so were Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses and the prophets, and so too were Christ and his apostles; and I feel no disgrace in ranking with such society, however, it may be subject to the illiberal buffoonery of such men as your correspondent.

I am a *REPUBLICAN*! Thank God I have not been so heedless and so ignorant of what has passed, and is now passing in the political world. I have not been so proud or so prejudiced as to renounce the cause for which I fought, as an American, throughout the whole of the revolutionary war, in the militia of Charleston, and in Polaskeys legion. I fought in almost every action which took place in Carolina, and in the disastrous affair of Savannah, shared the hardships of that sanguinary day, and for three and twenty years I felt no disposition to change my political any more than my religious principles. And which in spite of the writing scribblers of aristocracy, I shall hold sacred until death, as not to feel the ardour of republicanism. Your correspondent, Mr. Wayne, cannot have known what it is to serve this country from principle in time of danger and difficulties, at the expense of his health and his peace, of his pocket and his person, as I have done; or he would not be as he is, a pert reviler of those who have so done. As I do not suspect you Mr. Wayne of being the author of the attack on me, I shall not enquire what share you or your relations had in establishing the liberties of our country. On religious grounds I am a republican. Kingly government was first conceded to the foolish complaints of the Jewish people as a punishment and a curse; and so it was

to them until their dispersion, and so it has been to every nation who have been so foolishly tempted to submit to it. Great Britain has a king, and her enemies need not wish her the sword, the pestilence and the famine.

In the history of the Jews, are contained the earliest warning against kingly government, as any one may know who has read the fable of Abimeleck or the exhortation of Samuel. But I do not recommend them to your reporter, Mr. Wayne; to him the language of truth and soberness would be unintelligible.

I am a Jew, and if for no other reason, for that reason am I a republican. Among the pious priesthood of church establishments, we are compassionately ranked with Turks, Infidels, and Heretics. In the monarchies of Europe we are hunted from society, stigmatized as unworthy of common civility, thrust out, as it were, from the converse of men; objects of mockery and insult to forward children, the butts of vulgar wit and low buffoonery, such as your correspondent, Mr. Wayne, is not ashamed to set us an example of. Among the nations of Europe we are inhabitants everywhere; but citizens nowhere *unless in republics*. Here, in France, and in the Batavian republic alone, we are treated as men and as brethren. In republics we have rights, in monarchies we live but to experience *wrongs*. And why? because we and our forefathers have *not* sacrificed our principles to our interest, or earned an exemption from pain and poverty, by the dereliction of our religious duties, no wonder we are objects of derision to those, who have no principles, moral or religious, to guide their conduct.

How then can a Jew be but a Republican? In America particularly. Unfeeling and ungrateful would he be if he were callous to the glorious and benevolent cause of the difference between his situation in this land of freedom and among the proud and privileged law-givers of Europe.

But I am POOR: I am so, my family also is large, but soberly and decently brought up. They have not been taught to revile a Christian because his religion is not as old as theirs. They have not been taught to mock even at the errors of good intentions, and conscientious belief. I trust they will always leave this to men as unlike themselves, as I hope I am to your scurrilous correspondent.

I know that to pursue proud aristocracy poverty is a crime, but it may sometimes be accompanied with honesty even in a

Jew; I was bankrupt some years ago; I obtained my certificate and was discharged from my debts. Having been more successful afterwards, I called my creditors together, and eight years afterwards, unsolicited, I discharged all my old debts. I offered interest which was refused by my creditors, and they gave me from under their hands without any solicitations of mine, as a testimonial of the fact (to use their own language) "as a tribute due to my honor and honesty." This testimonial was signed by Messrs. J. Ball, W. Wister, George Meade, J. Phillips, C. G. Paleske, J. Bispham, J. Cohen, Robert Smith, J. H. Leuffer, A. Kuhn, John Stille, S. Pleasants, M. Woodhouse, Thomas Harrison, M. Boaraef, E. K. Laskey, and Thomas Allibone, etc.

I was discharged by the insolvent act; true, because having the amount of my debts owing to me from the French republic, the differences between France and America have prevented the recovery of what was due to me, in time to discharge what was due to my creditors. Hitherto it has been the fault of the political situation of the two countries that my creditors are not paid. When peace shall enable me to receive what I am entitled to, it will be my fault if they are not fully paid.

This is a long defence Mr. Wayne, but you have called it forth, and therefore, I hope you at least will not object to it. The public will now judge who is the proper object of ridicule and contempt, your facetious reporter, or

Your humble servant,

BENJAMIN NONES

Philadelphia, August 11, 1800

SPEECH OF MR. JACOB HENRY IN THE NORTH CAROLINA LEGISLATURE, 1809

I certainly, Mr. Speaker, know not the design of the Declaration of Rights made by the people of this State in the year 1776, if it was not to consecrate certain great and fundamental rights and principles, which even the Constitution cannot impair; for the 44th section of the latter instrument declares that the Declaration of Rights ought never to be violated, on any pretense whatever, if there is any apparent difference between the two instruments, they ought, if possible, to be reconciled; but if there

is a final repugnance between them, the Declaration of Rights must be considered paramount; for I believe it is to the Constitution, as the Constitution is to the law; it controls and directs it absolutely and conclusively. If, then, a belief in the Protestant religion is required by the Constitution to qualify a man for a seat in this house, and such qualification is dispensed with by the Declaration of Rights, the provision of the Constitution must be altogether inoperative; as the language of the Bill of Rights is, "that all men have a natural and inalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences." It is undoubtedly a natural right, and when it is declared to be an inalienable one by the people in their sovereign and original capacity, any attempt to alienate it either by the Constitution or by law, must be vain and fruitless.

It is difficult to conceive how such a provision crept into the Constitution, unless it is from the difficulty the human mind feels in suddenly emancipating itself from fetters by which it has long been enchained; and how adverse it is to the feelings and manners of the people of the present day every gentleman may satisfy himself by glancing at the religious belief of the persons who fill the various offices in this State: there are Presbyterians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Mennonists, Baptists, Trinitarians, and Unitarians. But, as far as my observation extends, there are fewer Protestants, in the strict sense of the word, used by the Constitution, than any other persuasion; for I suppose that they meant by it, the Protestant religion as established by the law in England. For other persuasions we see houses of worship in almost every part of the State, but very few of the Protestant; so few, that indeed I fear that the people of this State would for some time remain unrepresented in the House, if that clause of the Constitution is supposed to be in force. So far from believing in the Thirty-nine Articles, I will venture to assert that a majority of the people never have read them.

If a man should hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, I do not hesitate to pronounce that he should be excluded from the public councils of the same; and I trust if I know myself, no one would be more ready to aid and assist than myself. But I should really be at a loss to specify any known religious principles which are thus dangerous. It is surely a question between a man and his maker, and requires more than human attributes to pronounce which of the numerous

sects prevailing in the world is most acceptable to the Deity. If a man fulfills the duties of that religion, which his education or his conscience has pointed to him as the true one, no person, I hold, in this land of liberty, has a right to arraign him at the bar of any inquisition; and the day, I trust, has long passed, when principles merely speculative were propagated by force; when the sincere and pious were made victims, and light-minded bribed into hypocrites.

The purest homage man could render the Almighty was in the sacrifice of his passions and the performance of his duties. That the ruler of the universe would receive with equal benignity the various offerings of man's adoration, if they proceed from the heart. Governments only concern the action and conduct of man, and not his speculative notions.

Who among us feels himself so exalted above his fellows as to have a right to dictate to them any mode of belief? Shall this free country set an example of persecution, which even the returning season of enslaved Europe would not submit to? Will you bind the conscience in chains, and fasten upon the mind in spite of the conclusions of reason and of those ties and habitudes which are blended with every pulsation of the heart? Are you prepared to plunge at once from the sublime heights of moral legislation into the dark and gloomy caverns of superstitious ignorance? Will you drive from your shores and from the shelters of your Constitution, all who do not lay their oblations on the same altar, observe the same ritual, and subscribe to the same dogmas? If so, which, among the various sects into which we are divided, shall be the favored one?

I should insult the understanding of this House, to suppose it possible that they could ever assent to such absurdities; for all know that persecution in all its shapes and modifications, is contrary to the genius of our government, and the spirit of our laws, and that it can never produce any other effect than to render men hypocrites or martyrs.

When Charles V, Emperor of Germany, tired of the career of government, resigned his crown to his son, he retired to a monastery, where he amused the evening of his life in regulating the movements of watches, endeavoring to make a number to keep the same time; but, not being able to make any two to go exactly alike, it led him to reflect upon the folly and crimes he had committed, in attempting the impossibility of making men think alike!

Nothing is more easily demonstrated than that the conduct alone is the subject of human laws, and that man ought to suffer civil disqualification for what he does, and not for what he thinks. The mind can conceive laws only from Him, of whose Divine essence it is a portion; He alone can punish disobedience; for who else can know its movements, or estimate their merits? The religion I profess, inculcates every duty which man owes to his fellow-men; it enjoins upon its votaries the practice of every virtue, and the detestation of every vice; it teaches them to hope for the favor of heaven exactly in proportion as their lives have been directed by just, honorable, and beneficent maxims. This, then, gentlemen, is my creed; it was impressed upon my infant mind, it has been the director of my youth, the monitor of my manhood, and will, I trust, be the consolation of my old age. At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you cannot see anything in this religion, to deprive me of my seat in this house. So far as relates to my life and conduct, the examination of these I submit with cheerfulness to your candid and liberal construction. What may be the religion of him who made this objection against me, or whether he has any religion or not I am unable to say. I have never considered it my duty to pry into the belief of other members of this house. If their actions are upright and conduct just, the rest is for their own consideration, not for mine. I do not seek to make converts to my faith, whatever it may be esteemed in the eyes of my officious friend, nor do I exclude anyone from my esteem or friendship, because he and I differ in that respect. The same charity, therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect, will be extended to myself, because in all things that relate to the State and to the duties of civil life, I am bound by the same obligations with my fellow-citizens, nor does any man subscribe more sincerely than myself to the maxim, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye so even unto them, for such is the law and the prophets."

JEWISH CONGREGATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1850 ARRANGED BY STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND YEAR OF FOUNDING

ALABAMA

Mobile Co. (Mobile), Shaara Shamayyim (1841). Montgomery Co. (Montgomery), Mevakker Holim (1847).

CALIFORNIA

Eldorado Co. (Coloma), Congregation (1850). San Francisco Co. (San Francisco), Emanu El (1850), Shearith Israel (1850).

CONNECTICUT

Hartford Co. (Hartford), Beth Israel (1843). New Haven Co. (New Haven), Mishkan Israel (1840).

GEORGIA

Chatham Co. (Savannah), Mikveh Israel (1733). Richmond Co. (Augusta), B'nai Israel (1846).

ILLINOIS

Cook Co. (Chicago), Kehillath Anshe Maarib (1847).

INDIANA

Allen Co. (Fort Wayne), Achdut Ve Shalom (1848). Tippecanoe Co. (Lafayette), Shebeth Achim (1842).

KENTUCKY

Jefferson Co. (Louisville), Adath Israel (1842).

LOUISIANA

Ascension Co. (Donaldsonville), Bikkur Holim (1850). Orleans Co. (New Orleans), Ahavath Ahim (1850), Gates of Prayer (LaFayette) (1849), Nefutsoth Judah (1845), Shaare Hesed (1828).

MARYLAND

Baltimore Co. (Baltimore), Fells' Point Heb. Friendship Cong. (1838), First Baltimore Hebrew (Hidhe Israel) (1830), Har Sinai (1842).

MASSACHUSETTS

Suffolk Co. (Boston), Ohave Shalom (1842).

MICHIGAN

Wayne Co. (Detroit), Beth El (1850).

MISSISSIPPI

Adams Co. (Natchez), B'nai Israel (1843). Warren Co. (Vicksburg), Anshe Hese (1843).

MISSOURI

St. Louis Co. (St. Louis), United Hebrew (1838), B'nai El (1850).

NEW JERSEY

Essex Co. (Newark), B'nai Jeshurun (1848). Passaic Co. (Paterson), B'nai Jeshurun (1847).

NEW YORK

Albany Co. (Albany), Anshe Emeth (1850), Beth El (1838), Beth Jacob (1847). Erie Co. (Buffalo), Beth El (1847), Beth Zion (1850). Livingston Co. Congregation (2). New York Co. (N. Y. City), Ahaveth Hese (1848), Anshe Hese (1830), Beth Abraham (1850), Beth Israel (1846), Bikkur Holim (1849), B'nai Israel (1847), B'nai Jeshurun (1825), Emanuel (1845), Rodef Shalom (1842), Shaare Hashamayim (1840), Shaare Rahamin (1849), Shaare Tefellah (1846), Shaare Zede (1839), Sheerith Israel (1680). Monroe Co. (Rochester), B'rith Kodesh (1840). Onondaga Co. (Syracuse), Society of Concord (1846).

OHIO

Cuyahoga Co. (Cleveland), Anshe Hese (1839), Tifereth Israel (1850). Hamilton Co. (Cincinnati), Adath Israel (1847), Ahavath Ahim (1848), B'nai Israel (1824), B'nai Jeshurun (1840).

PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny Co. (Pittsburgh), Shaare Shamayyim (1846). Lancaster Co. (Lancaster), Congregation (1776) (?). Luzerne Co. (Wilkes-Barre), B'nai B'rith (1845). Montour Co. (Danville), B'nai Zion (1849). Northampton Co. (Easton), B'rith Shalom (1839). Philadelphia Co. (Philadelphia), Beth Israel (1849), B'nai Israel (1847), Keneseth Israel (1847), Mikveh Israel (1782), Rodef Shalom (1802).

RHODE ISLAND

Newport Co. (Newport), Jeshuath Israel (1658).

SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston Co. (Charleston), Beth Elohim (1750), Sheerith Israel (1843). Richland Co. (Columbia), Columbia Hebrew Congregation (1822).

VIRGINIA

Norfolk Co. (Norfolk), Ohev Shalom (1848). Henrico Co. (Richmond), Beth Shalom (1791), Beth Shavah (1841).

WEST VIRGINIA

Ohio Co. (Wheeling), Leshem Shamayyim (1849).

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee Co. (Milwaukee), Congregation (1850) (?)

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